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The Countess Pharamond.

(A SEQUEL TO "SHEBA.")

By "RITA,"

Author of "GRETCHEN," "THE LAIRD O' COCKPEN," "SHEBA," etc., etc.

Book IV.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CIRCLE NARROWS.

SHEBA went homeward with a lighter heart after that meeting.

The faithful memory and love of little Paul were inexpressibly sweet to her in this hour of suffering. She asked herself if it were not possible to grant this one pleasure to her lonely life. Only to see the boy, to hear his father's name, to know of his father's welfare through so near a channel would be enough to make her happy.

It seemed a very small and simple pleasure. The thought, however, of broaching the subject to Mrs. Levison made her shrink as from the touch of hot iron. Even to mention that dear name was torture. She dreaded the coarse aspersions and cruel speeches that her mother heaped unsparingly on her lover. It was scarcely likely that she would consent to receive visits from his son—child as he was.

Before she reached home the old heavy shadow was by her side, and the momentary gladness and peace had faded into gloom.

She went into her little close study, and looked with a sense of despair at the work before her. How could she write with such an aching brain, such a heavy heart? There was no spell potent enough to waken inspiration.

She gave up the struggle at last, and went up to her bedroom, and there, suddenly and unexpectedly, fell into a deep dreamless sleep, which lasted till the bell rang for that early dinner, which Mrs. Levison persistently styled luncheon.

Sheba came into the room, her cheeks still softly flushed with sleep and her eyes bright and clear once more.

Her mother surveyed her with some surprise.

"How much better you look," she exclaimed.

"I have had a long rest," said the girl.

"You have not been writing?" Mrs. Levison questioned with amiable and strategic interest.

"No. When I came in from the park I was too tired, and I fell asleep."

She looked at her mother, emboldened by her pacific aspect.

"I must tell you," she said, with her usual downright candour, "that I met my little pupil from Sydney this morning. Little Lord Dormer, he is now." The colour wavered, her voice grew unsteady. "The boy begged me to let him come and see me sometimes. He was always fond of me. Would you object if he did so?"

Mrs. Levison's face darkened with a combative frown.

"I should object very much. Really, Sheba, you have the most singular ideas. The son of that——"

"Yes, I know it must sound strange," said the girl, wincing at the forthcoming epithet. "But he begged so hard, and I said I would ask you. The child knows nothing," she added, in a low, trembling voice.

"It is a new phase in your character to consult your mother's wishes or desires," said Mrs. Levison. "Quite a marvel. I have long given up expecting to be considered in any way."

Sheba was silent, her eyes fixed on her plate. She had scarcely expected her request to meet with favour, but faithful to her promise to Paul she had made it.

"The next thing, I suppose, I shall be asked to receive Lord Amersley," continued Mrs. Levison, fuming. "A man whose whole conduct has been iniquitous. You seem to consider I have as little delicacy of feeling as yourself."

"That is sufficient," said Sheba, in the old hard manner. "I asked you a question—it is answered. We need not discuss the matter any more."

But Mrs. Levison was not the person to end any discussion without having "said her say" about it, and the rest of the meal was enjoyably relieved by hints, rebukes, and sarcasms, that buzzed round Sheba's ears with the pertinacious annoyance of gnats, and rendered the exercise of patience very difficult.

It was a relief when she could leave the table, and know that Mrs. Levison would retire for a couple of hours for her afternoon *siesta*.

"I did not expect she would let the boy come here," thought Sheba. "I ought not to feel disappointed. I suppose it does seem odd to wish it."

She sat down to write the few lines which Paul had asked for, wording the disappointment as gently as she could, and telling him that if they met it must be left to chance, as on this first occasion. She told him she would always think of him, always love him, but that any renewal of the old friendship was impossible. She sent no message to his father. He would not need any, she felt convinced. Her love of him and her keen sense of its reality, made all such weak methods of communication of trifling importance. To love founded on a rock of faith, division need not be bridged over by the airy fabric of passing words.

"When he claims me I am his," she told herself. "Till then I must trust, and hope, and be patient."

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After that rash and impulsive action which had convinced him of Sheba's actual existence no less than of her unchanged feelings, Paul had suffered a terrible remorse. Carried away by the surging memories of the past, by the dangerous sweetness of the present, by the sense of his own changelessness and his own passion, he had forgotten how cruel a barrier existed still. Remembering how he had left her, it seemed but right and natural that she should return to empty arms and hungered heart, as gladly as they would have welcomed her back.

But she seemed to have put a cold and cruel distance between that time and this meeting. Yet Sheba was right. Reunion *was* impossible. He felt that, and yet rebelled with all the strength and energy of his nature at the feeling.

It seemed so hard that all his wealth and power, all his faith and constancy, all his ungovernable love and longing, could not give this one woman back to him. . . . So strange to think that the whole world held no foe so unconquerable as her simple, "No, Paul."

For hours and hours after he had left her, she lived in his memory a breathing pulsing defiance of the desire of his life. Of her love he felt assured, but the change in her attitude towards himself was startling, and not yet fully comprehended. When the first fever of memory and association passed into calmer reflection, he began to see that this attitude was a more natural result of events than he had at first imagined.

He could no longer defy the world in hot rebellion of its laws and its judgment. His position now demanded some deference to those laws, and his duty to his son forbade the lessening of any moral restraint that might give rise to question or scandal in the future.

The past was unreliable. The chain of circumstances that had first parted him from Sheba had grown stronger and stronger with the events and obligations that were for ever forging fresh links. He might break it by sheer force of desperation—he could not unloose its fetters without calling down the notice and obloquy of the world.

When he saw his boy for the first time after that interview, he felt how right she was. That the selfishness of a man's passion can lay a burden on a woman's life that gives living shape to sin, and turns the dearest treasure of her womanhood into a ceaseless reproach to herself.

The girl who had loved him so passionately and unselfishly had learned this lesson. Nature and her own soul had taught it in plainer language than the strictures of the moralist could have done. As he met Paul's frank eyes and welcome greeting he felt that she had saved him from a new self-abasement; and when he told the boy of their strange meeting, he painted her in colours more reverent than those which mere passion lends to pictured womanhood. It was impossible to hide his joy at her recovery; it was impossible, altogether, to hide the poignancy of disappointment at the present position of their lives, and yet it was still more impossible to explain why this position must continue.

But the little lad had a rooted conviction that whatever his father did was right—even if not quite comprehensible. A shade crossed his young face, which had grown so bright and radiant at this welcome news, but he only said, "I suppose you know best, papa. But she loved us so well. It seems very strange she will not come back to us."

Then his father had dismissed him for his morning's ride, and that day he had seen him no more.

The next—when a boyish whim had determined the Regent's Park as more novel ground for a constitutional—he had come face to face with Sheba herself, and that interview left him even more puzzled by the strained nature of the former relationship. He had rushed home and at once sought his father to give him this wonderful news. He found he was not alone. A gentleman was in the library—a stranger to Paul. The boy thought he looked like a clergyman, though his dress was not of orthodox clerical pattern. He was about to retire, with that old-fashioned courtesy of manner that was so much a part of himself, when his father called him back.

"This gentleman, Paul, has kindly consented to undertake the supervision of your studies. I am not satisfied with your present tutor. Mr. Hill, this is my son Paul."

The boy shook hands—surveying his new instructor with a long steady gaze.

"I hope we shall be good friends," said the new tutor, who was no other than Noel Hill. "You are not quite a stranger to me. I was in Australia for many years, and I know some friends of yours . . . *one* especially—very well. I was just telling your father——"

"Not Sheba!" exclaimed the boy impetuously. "Do you know her—Miss Ormatroyd?"

"Yes. That is the very lady."

"Oh, papa," cried Paul breathlessly, "then I may speak. You won't mind? I've seen her—I've spoken to her! She was in the park to-day when I went for my walk, and I knew her at once. . . . I was so glad. But she looks very ill, papa—not a bit like what she used to do."

The earl's face grew very white. He left his chair abruptly, and went over to the window.

The boy looked at Noel Hill, and then, somewhat wistfully,

towards his father. He could not speak as he wished to speak before a stranger. Noel also looked embarrassed.

Presently the earl returned. The boy went close to him and whispered something, to which he gave an affirmative nod. Then the little fellow quietly left the room.

There was a moment of painful and uncomfortable silence. It was broken by Noel Hill.

"This is a curious sequel to our long confidential conversation," he observed. "It is strange how the circle is narrowing. The boy is deeply attached to her, is he not?"

"She is the only mother he has ever known," said Lord Amersley . . . "And—naturally—he cannot understand the changed circumstances."

"I need not ask you to respect what I have told you, I am sure. It is better for all parties that there should be no renewal of the old friendship—even so far as the boy is concerned."

"I know that. Her decision is perfectly right. But I am afraid Paul will suffer more than we imagine; he is very tender-hearted, and his affections are somewhat limited. There are few people for whom he does care—but for those he cares very deeply."

"It is a nature that works out its own suffering," said Noel regretfully.

"I fear so. I have tried to act for the best. The boy was always a fragile little fellow, with a soul far in advance of his body. He is not fond of his own sex as companions. He seems to shrink instinctively from everything coarse, or rough, or unsympathetic. I tell you this in order that you may know your ground. But the boy never gives trouble. He is tractable and reasonable, and very conscientious."

"I will do my best, Lord Amersley, to justify your trust in me. You, on your part, will, I hope, forgive my plain speaking this morning. I wish to be the friend of both. I was urged to this somewhat bold proceeding of seeking you personally, by my anxiety respecting Sheba. I feared, from what I saw of her the other day, that neither mental nor physical strength would be capable of enduring a . . . a repetition of such a scene as that of your meeting. Remember what I have told you about the desperation of mind which almost sealed her fate. I should dread, above all things, a renewal of the strain . . . it would

overtax her already heavily-burdened strength. Her life is hard and she works with far too zealous an energy in order to forget its hardships. If you would serve her best, leave her to herself. I can give no other advice. I have been her friend for long enough to understand her, and what is best for her."

"I am sure you mean well. The worst horror of a false position is the inability to make a third person believe it was unintentional. I would give my life to share her sorrow or suffering, and I am helpless to serve her in any way!"

"Indeed I pity you with all my heart," said Noel earnestly. "And I assure you, Lord Amersley, I believe the fault *was* unintentional. I would scarcely take your hand or stand under your roof if I thought you had deliberately wronged this noble and heroic nature."

"As there is a heaven above us I never did. In the highest and purest sense of the meaning of 'wifehood' Sheba Ormatroyd is my wife. Fate has been cruel, and heaven was unjust, but that does not alter the fact. I have never loved or thought of any woman as I have loved and thought of her. I never can . . . So much I know of my own heart."

Noel Hill had grown strangely pale. When he spoke his voice sounded cold and restrained.

"You are equally sure of *her* truth and constancy?"

"As sure as of my own."

"I think you have good cause to be," said the young clergyman, with a strange, sad bitterness that long after Paul remembered—and understood.

CHAPTER VII.

A CRY FOR HELP.

"Two gentlemen in the parlour, miss; and your ma says will you please come down and see them?"

Sheba lifted her head. "Who are they, Mary?" she asked in surprise.

"Mr. Hill and the foreign gentleman—him as called yesterday, miss."

"I will come down directly," said Sheba.

How fortunate that Noel should have called at the same time, she thought, as she smoothed her hair before the glass. The ordeal of meeting Count Pharamond would not be so trying a one.

When she entered the little sitting-room her face had no colour—her eyes had dark circles beneath them. Her tall, slender figure looked very fragile in the simple black dress that clung so closely about her.

The count's first feeling was a shock of surprise; his next that old unaccountable feverish admiration for this cold girl. What was there about her, he asked himself, that seemed to set her apart and above all those frivolous, worldly coquettes by whom he had been always surrounded. His wife's beauty, *Hélène de Valette's* charm, the loveliness of so many women he had known, had never awakened such a feeling in him as *Sheba Ormatroyd* could waken with one glance of her dark sad eyes, one touch of that slender reluctant hand. As he took the hand and touched it with his lips he felt her shudder.

"She hates me still," he thought. "I wonder why."

She scarcely answered his greeting, but turned to Noel Hill. Her whole face altered, and the count watched it with moody, jealous eyes. She seated herself by Noel, and began to talk to him. After that brief conventional greeting she took no more notice of Pharamond. She had obeyed her mother—there was no need to do more. Noel, who had taken an instinctive dislike to the count, left him to be entertained by *Mrs. Levison*, and began to talk in a low, confidential tone to *Sheba*.

This was a proceeding that did not please Pharamond. He answered *Mrs. Levison's* platitudes with undisguised impatience. At the first opportunity he addressed the girl so pointedly that she was obliged to answer him.

"I deeply regret, *mademoiselle*, that my poor house was not honoured by your presence the other night. In what way have my wife or myself been so unfortunate as to offend you?"

"In no way, count," said *Sheba*, with indifference. "Only—as I bade my mother inform you—I accept no invitations."

"But would you not come to us when we are alone?" urged Pharamond. "Surely so old a friend as *Bessie* may claim that privilege?"

Sheba coloured and looked uncomfortable.

"I shall be pleased always to see your wife, if she desires it. But my time is so occupied that I cannot promise to call on her."

The count bit his lip.

"You are either very cruel, Mademoiselle Sheba, or you think us too unworthy of the honour your presence would bestow, now that you have become—celebrated."

The proud quiet eyes looked at him unflinchingly.

"If I must speak plainly, Count Pharamond, I can but repeat to you what I said to your wife. I do not intend to go into any society. I live for my work, and I am happier so."

"That is exactly what I told you, count," said Mrs. Levison triumphantly. "If your persuasions are of no avail, of what use are my poor attempts? Sheba is obstinately determined on sacrificing pleasure to hardship. She has always had odd tastes, you know."

The count smiled, but his lowered lids hid the expression of his eyes.

"I shall trust to time and—circumstances—to alter her resolves," he said meaningly. "She is too young and charming to lead an anchorite's life."

Noel Hill interposed.

"I think," he said, "that Miss Ormatroyd is perfectly right. It is impossible for art and pleasure to work together. The former is bound to suffer."

"Art?" exclaimed Mrs. Levison. "No one is talking about art, Mr. Hill. Sheba only scribbles stories and things for magazines."

"Perhaps that occupation is not quite undeserving of the name," said Noel Hill quietly. "Literature is a wide field, Mrs. Levison. You appear to forget that your daughter's book has made a name for her, and that others are expected to follow. If she wishes to work worthily, she is certainly better able to do so apart from the distractions of the world."

"Mr. Hill always champions Sheba," exclaimed Mrs. Levison to the count. "He was her first tutor, and naturally feels some interest in his pupil."

The count bowed somewhat haughtily. He saw there was no chance of the obnoxious visitor's retreat, or that Sheba would condescend to notice him. He must take active steps to win her favour, and break down that barrier which he felt opposed his

désires. After a short interval, in which the conversation was very one-sided, he took his leave.

As he bent over Sheba's hand once more, he murmured :

"You received my poor offering, I trust, mademoiselle. I was deeply distressed to hear of your indisposition."

The girl's face flushed scarlet.

"I thank you, count. You meant kindly, no doubt, but do not ever send me presents of *any* sort. I retained the flowers in deference to my mother's wishes. Had I followed my own I would have told you that to be under any obligation is painful to me."

"You are determined to be as cruel as ever, Sheba," he said, with one quick glance into her eyes that awoke the old horror and dislike of this man.

She drew her hand abruptly away, and made him no reply.

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"I have something to say to you, Sheba—can I see you alone?" asked Noel Hill, as Mrs. Levison accompanied her guest to the door. "Nothing to be alarmed at," he added quickly, as he met her frightened glance, "but I don't wish your mother to hear it."

"We will go to my writing-room," said Sheba, rising. "I will explain to my mother that we have some literary matters to discuss."

Mrs. Levison received the announcement with becoming indifference, and did not oppose their retreat.

When the door was closed, Sheba looked anxiously at the grave face of her companion.

"What is it?" she asked.

"You will be surprised to hear that I have accepted a tutorship," he said. "I thought it better than waiting for a curacy. And my pupil," he added, with some hesitation, "is no other than the little son of Lord Amersley."

"Paul!" exclaimed Sheba—"my little Paul! Oh, Noel, I am so glad—so glad. But how did it happen?"

"Lord Amersley has been trying to find a tutor to his mind, but without success. I heard of it through a friend, and applied. He thought I would suit, I suppose, and so —"

"Noel," said the girl hurriedly, "you speak as if it hurt you—as if you did not like it."

"Oh, I shall like it well enough," he said. "I saw the boy; he is a charming little fellow. He had just come back from his walk, and was brimful of excitement respecting his meeting with you so strangely."

"Did he tell his father?" asked Sheba, growing very pale.

"Yes. You will be surprised to hear that Lord Amersley and I had already had a long conversation about you."

She only looked at him—she could not speak.

"I understand so much better since I have seen him," continued Noel, his voice somewhat unsteady, but very gentle. "I often wondered, Sheba, whether the man you loved was to be blamed or pitied. After to-day I can only think his own self-condemnation exceeds any punishment."

She bent her head as if to hide the sudden shamed flush that crept up to her brow.

"You don't know," she said brokenly, "all he has suffered—all he has borne for my sake. Never was man's heart truer—nobler than his."

"You have set yourself a very hard task, Sheba," said Noel gently. "Will you have strength to go through with it?"

"I don't know," she cried despairingly as she lifted her heavy eyes. "It would have been some consolation to have seen the child now and then; he begged it so hard. But I cannot go to him, and my mother won't allow him to come here."

"You asked her, then?"

"Yes, when I came home from the Regent's Park after meeting little Paul."

Noel Hill looked at her with deep compassion.

"Perhaps she is right, Sheba. There should be no paltering with temptation. Better to cut yourself adrift entirely, however hard it is."

"Oh," she cried with a sudden passion that vivified and transformed her face into strange beauty. "Do you think I don't *know* that? That I haven't felt it every hour since I saw him again? When two love as we love they must be all in all or—nothing."

Her head sank on her hands. A sob burst from her. "Tell him to keep away. Tell him I cannot see him—I *dare* not. Oh,

Noel, you know what my life is. Every hardship, every difficulty, every pain and humiliation that are my daily lot only make me long to fly to him once more—to drown every thought and memory in the ocean of his love. What matters all the rest !”

The passionate reckless words seemed to fall on the listener's heart with the scorching touch of such anguish as it had never known.

For a moment he could not move or speak. He felt as one listening to the death-psalm chanted over something loved and lost might feel, and yet the visible haunting shape was before him, to torture and to disenchant that love.

“I must bear it—I must be silent,” he thought ; but the sound of her quickened breath hurt his ears and made him tremble at his own weakness.

Thought was confused, but the consciousness of pain throbbed in every pulse, and in the chaos of suffering he was hardly conscious of her broken sobs, her entreating voice.

“Oh, forgive me, Noel. This is not what you taught—what I promised. I—have I shocked you? You look so pale.”

She fell on her knees and clasped his hands impulsively. “Pray for me, Noel. Comfort me as you did in that other dreadful time. Oh, don't turn aside! I am in a moral shipwreck. Yours is the only hand that can save me. Men can stand alone and suffer—a woman can't !”

He nerved himself for the conflict as Christian martyr might have done for the wild terrors of the arena. He thrust himself aside with resolute hand, saying, “Your time will come . . . wait.” And though his heart seemed lifeless beneath its weight of pain, his voice was no less gentle, his counsels no less wise.

“God of mercy, give me this woman's soul! What matters my suffering?” he prayed within himself, while his hand trembled on her bowed head and his lips poured out in brief beseeching words the petition she dared not frame for herself.

A moment—and she rose from her knees, the tears still bright on her lashes, the flush still warm on her cheek.

“I ought to believe in your God, Noel, if only for sake of the friend He has sent me. Don't stop. Go on speaking as you used to speak. I have forgotten so much. I have lost sight of Him so long ; but all my philosophies have only bewildered me—they cannot help or comfort as your words can.”

So once again as in the days when she was a child—perplexed by the inconsistencies of Scripture, and the dogmatism of creeds, and the contradictory assertions of man—he opened his heart to her and spoke.

He had always been a man of large faith and simple creeds, with nothing in his soul of that oppressive narrowness which hampers so much clerical teaching.

He knew this girl's nature so well. Had he not seen it grow and expand, rising above the mental level of her surroundings, suffering much because it could endure much? He knew that such a nature had in its depths a core of soundness, but that its impulses were far-reaching and impetuous, needing careful guidance, and teaching that had both strength and patience.

In this moral and physical shipwreck that had come upon her, he could only recognize the inevitable results of that cramped tyranny of her childhood. Religion had been made a thing of dry form and harsh doctrine, when the child had yearned instinctively for something large, noble, beautiful. She did not care for what was only customary and respectable—for the facts conveyed by baptism, or confirmation, or church attendance. These meant so little that questioning as to their real merits awoke as of necessity. Met at this point by the bigoted assertions that they belonged to the eternal fitness of things, and having been sanctified by long observance must of necessity be *right*, she had fallen into the pardonable and not unusual error of declaring them wrong.

The companionship and teaching of Müller had presented themselves at the most critical time of her life, and been eagerly seized upon by her hungry soul. However true or rational such teaching was, it too, after a time, ceased to supply that want in the girl's nature which was never destined to be satisfied. Swept downwards by a sea of recurrent calamities, her troubled soul again lost itself in moral darkness. Müller had bidden her seek out truth for herself, but she had neither his hatred of priestcraft nor his calm balance of mind to enable her to pursue such investigation.

For a time succeeded utter blankness and utter despair. Then once again the wise and patient teacher of her childhood crossed her path, and with some sudden sense of danger near and appalling, she clung to him as if indeed shipwrecked.

She was still desperately enthusiastic. She could not love or hate, believe or doubt, by halves. Hitherto her work had saved her from utter desperation, but she had reached a crisis now where passive unhappiness had passed into active misery.

The very act of rejecting Paul's love and sending him from her, brought back a wild ungovernable longing for that love that almost threatened to overpower her strength. It was a time of utmost need, of pitiful human weakness, and arrayed against them the force of reason and the habit of self-control were of small account. At such times it is not what we are taught but what we see and *feel* for ourselves, that marks the worth of teaching.

Sheba could realize the need of prayer, but she could not pray. It seemed still so vain and useless. How could her tormented soul lift itself up to that high footstool where the pure and blessed knelt in adoration? She was vaguely conscious that there might be peace and comfort in the act, but she lacked the faith for its performance. She was conscious of childish entreaties, of agonized loneliness, of wrestlings with things unseen and terrible that sprang from the wrath of an offended God; but never once had she been conscious that her sufferings had been pitied, her tears dried, her passionate prayers accepted.

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Alas! what barbed arrows may speed to childish souls, in the unthinking or ignorant words of those who teach them.

Better unconsciousness or ignorance than such teaching as had fallen to the lot of Sheba Ormatroyd, leaving her to face its results with a broken heart and a shipwrecked life.

CHAPTER VIII.

A DRAMA WITHIN A DRAMA.

SINCE the evening of the dinner party graced by the presence of Mrs. Levison and her step-daughter, Bessie had scarcely seen or spoken to her husband. She accepted the situation gladly enough. Her terror and abhorrence of him were increasing with a force that threatened catastrophe. His absence, therefore, was at once a relief and a surprise.

Meanwhile her engagements were numerous, her days and nights absorbed in gaiety and amusements. Society had taken her up with a sudden enthusiasm that astonished herself, and she yielded to the enthusiasm with satisfaction, if not enjoyment.

She looked vainly for Lord Amersley in those fashionable haunts and meeting-places where "set" encounters "set" with the terrible monotony that fashion decrees. He was neither in park nor *salon*, nor at any of the luncheons, dinners, or receptions she so indefatigably attended. A strange feverish unrest took possession of her. She longed for some word or sign from him, but none came. He had never even apologized for his strange behaviour the night of her dinner party. In truth he had forgotten all about it, so absorbed had his mind been in this new-found gladness.

He cared for nothing, thought of nothing but that Sheba still lived. Divided as they were, and with all the sorrowful change of time and circumstance shadowing their fate, he yet could hope, and on hope he lived, and fed, and dreamed, with that romantic ardour and impassioned self-denying love that were part of his artistic and poetic temperament.

No wonder the world and the frivolous idlers of society seemed of small account. No wonder letters lay unread, unanswered, unheeded, while he was once more the lover of southern lands—the Romeo to whom death itself seemed sweeter than a loveless life. His passion absorbed him now as in the days when he had watched the stars under the eucalyptus trees, and wooed her with a lover's ardour in the sweet, hushed summer nights. It was little wonder, therefore, that he grew forgetful of the claims of the world, or impatient that it clamoured at his gates.

But of this the Countess Pharamond knew nothing. Shallow souls think all other souls are shallow. It was not in her to comprehend a feeling such as Sheba Ormatroyd had inspired in Paul Meredith.

She deemed all men the slaves of beauty and of physical charm. She could not distinguish between the passion of the senses and the love of the soul. To her Sheba was a plain, uninteresting and incomprehensible girl, without fascination—certainly without beauty—and utterly unlike the type of women who held men captive in their chains. Yet as day succeeded day she would have given anything to know if they had met again, and

with what result. Surely he would be disenchanted now! Surely he could have no possible thought of renewing the relationship once existing between them.

A man to whom no beauty would be harsh—to whom few could be indifferent—would surely never resume the shackles of that old foolish tie.

She tormented herself with wonder and conjecture—but all in vain. He made no sign, nor could any of her numerous friends or acquaintances tell her anything of him.

One evening as her maid was putting the finishing touches to her toilette, Pharamond entered her dressing-room. She saw he looked disturbed and sullen.

He sent the woman away, and then stood for a moment or two, absently fingering the trifles on the dressing-table.

"Do you know," he said abruptly, "that your friend is ill?"

She paled suddenly beneath the delicate colour on her cheeks. Her thoughts flew to Paul.

"What friend?" she asked calmly. "The term is rather vague."

"Sheba Ormatroyd," he said.

"Oh!" and she smiled significantly. "How did you hear of that?"

"I called there," he answered, his brow darkening at her significant tone. "It would have been better for you to have done so. I told you I wished you to renew the intimacy."

Bessie shrugged her white shoulders.

"You told me—yes—but Sheba does not second your kindly intentions, and for my part I do not care for the Levisons. The woman is odious with her self-conceit and her vanity. And as for Sheba—well, I should imagine you would scarcely desire your wife to associate with a person holding so very doubtful a position."

"When a woman is celebrated, the world does not trouble about her position, or inquire too closely into her antecedents," said Pharamond curtly.

"But Sheba is scarcely celebrated enough *yet* for such tolerance," answered his wife, as she clasped the diamonds on her shapely arm.

"She is celebrated enough to appear in my *salon*," he said. "And you must insist upon it. I doubt if many of your grand

ladies are as pure in life or thought as this girl whom you choose to deride."

"She is fortunate in having you for her champion," said Bessie tranquilly. "But really, my dear count, I don't know why I am to force this female anchorite from her self-chosen retreat. Why not try your own persuasions?"

She felt so confident that he had done so, and failed, that she could not hide the mocking smile that rose to her lips as she glanced at his angry face.

"Because I choose the advance to come from *you*," he said fiercely. "Do you hear me?—from *you*. Call on her, persuade her, flatter her, entreat her—what you please—only bring her here you must. If all else fails," he added with an ugly sneer, "bribe her by promising a meeting with her old lover. She will come fast enough then."

Bessie felt as if a cold wind had passed over her. "That is absurd," she answered with scorn for the puerile suggestion. "Do you suppose they need make my house a convenience for a *rendezvous*? They can afford to please themselves, and doubtless they will."

"I know better than that," he said brutally. "Men don't go back to cast-off loves. Your friend the earl has found new attractions. Let Sheba guess this, and jealousy will force her out of her shell. I know women, *ma chère*; they can bear anything but the slight of rivalry. Now will you do what I have asked?"

She understood him perfectly, though her face—save for a sudden hot flush—was serenely unconscious.

She did not meet his eyes now. It seemed to her that no shame could be so great as that conveyed by his coarse hint. A sense of her own impotence to resent it made her for a moment feel that brute longing for vengeance with which men receive a blow. But again, as she had done hundreds of times before, she crushed back the feeling, masked the shame, smiled tranquilly at the insult.

"I will do my best to please you," she said. "But really, my dear Maxime, you have no conception how hard and obstinate Sheba is. If she is determined not to go into the world, no one will be able to induce her. Certainly," she added with a meaning smile, "it would add to my *prestige* in society to have her 'on

show'—if only for once. But I cannot promise myself success any more than on the last occasion. Besides, you said she was ill."

"She has been ill—she is better," said Pharamond. "You had best call and see her."

"If I were inclined to be jealous," said Bessie meaningly, "I might object to your interest in the charming authoress. But I am too well assured of your constancy to imagine it is anything but natural and innocent."

"Sheba Ormatroyd certainly interests me. She has always done so," Pharamond answered curtly. "For the rest, I please myself in this as in most things, madame. We need not discuss the nature of that *interest*, or its possible result. They are not likely to affect you."

"I am quite sure of that," said Bessie tranquilly. "I will go and see her to-morrow. Now, will you have the goodness to ring for my maid? We are due at Lady Fitzallen's at eight o'clock, and it is almost that time now."

When she was alone the mask dropped from her face. It grew stormy with passion and suppressed fury.

"So that is to be the plot of the drama," she thought. "I am to play off Sheba's lover, while Pharamond pursues his schemes under cover of my connivance! No, my friend—the piece is a little too strong for the English stage however worthy of Parisian tastes and morals. Perhaps the *dénouement* may surprise even you!"

* * * * *

Sheba's mind had regained something of its former tranquillity—at least she was able to work once more, and to accept with the old mute patience the trivial annoyances with which existence under her mother's roof was daily spiced.

Yet the pin-pricks of little worries are often harder to bear than a great trouble. Certainly they are a heavier trial to temper, and a severer strain on mental endurance.

To the struggle and the conflict which were the necessary results of meeting Lord Amersley a dull, hopeless calm succeeded. Acute pain is often a stimulus to momentary strength. It is the reaction that tests the worth of such strength. This slow laborious life, these dull days following upon the emotional crisis already described, were a harder trial to Sheba than any previous experience. The peremptory hunger of her soul had

again asserted itself, and once more there awoke in her nature that craving for knowledge of some unlearned secret which Müller had tried to satisfy.

Fact and impulse, faith and scepticism, again sounded the trumpet-call of mental warfare. Her mind could not move complacently in a settled groove, nor feast on the imagined satisfaction of esoteric philosophies.

It wanted something nearer, simpler, more human, and in very helplessness clung with determined strength to the human hand held out in aid. This was what Noel Hill had feared, and a difficulty which he resolutely tried to conquer.

The strong tide of pitying love had swept him very near to this girl, but his longing to help her threatened his own life with serious difficulty. She was quite unconscious of the pain and tempting of her presence. Noel had always seemed to her a being set apart from the follies and passions of men. She looked upon his friendship for herself as quite an impersonal thing, to which her sex as woman lent infinitely less charm than the mental characteristics which he had been the first to recognize and foster.

She could not have believed that the touch of her hand, the pleading of her dark soft eyes, the sight of her tears, could move her teacher by spells more potent than manhood can well resist. She never thought that he too might have had a dream-world peopled by beautiful shapes, and that into it *one* shape had crept in bygone years, and there dwelt and grown as in some sure abiding-place, never while that world existed to be driven forth. Of such things Sheba never thought. Noel Hill was still to her counsellor, teacher, friend, strong and steadfast, noble and self-reliant. He held a place in her heart such as no other human being held, but there was something of reverence and adoration in her present attitude of worship, and it was this attitude that he tried to evade.

He knew he had influence over her, though how he had obtained it would have puzzled him greatly to determine. It was well he was wise enough and generous enough to use that influence solely for her benefit, regardless of his own sufferings.

It had not seemed easy to him to live under Lord Amersley's roof, or render him the service which his intense conscientiousness bade him render, yet he felt that in Sheba's interest it was

advisable to act thus, and to study—and, if need be, strengthen—the moral fibres of a nature where the elements of generosity and romance were associated with equally strong elements of materialism.

He had not been half an hour in the company of Lord Amersley before he ceased to wonder at Sheba's passionate worship of the man.

Physically considered, he had all the graces that attract a woman. Apart from these were the ardour and poetry, the sensitiveness and strength, the talents and individuality, that would appeal to the romantic and ideal side of her nature. It was almost impossible to avoid comparing him with other men, and he bore the comparison only too favourably.

With a keen pang of self-depreciation, Noel acknowledged this.

His instructions to little Paul only included three hours in the morning, and he had fallen into the habit of dropping in for half an hour's chat in the evening with Sheba.

Mrs. Levison was not often present. She laboured under the impression that Noel was trying to convert Sheba, and left her to his ministrations much as she would have left her to a dentist or a doctor had she needed their services.

It was only natural that the conversation should drift into the channel of interest with which both lives were gradually becoming associated—only natural that Sheba should hear of Lord Amersley and his little son almost daily, though she held no personal communication with either.

Sometimes she felt that fact hard enough to rebel against—at others welcomed it as a safeguard. Nothing would have been easier than to see him had she wished to do so. He had sent her but one message since that tragic meeting. She knew the words by heart: "My life and all that I have is at your service. In any way, at any time, command them. They will never fail you any more than my love."

The words rested near her heart night and day. Sometimes they comforted her—at others she felt afraid of their sweet tempting.

She was in this frame of mind when she received a second visit from the Countess Pharamond.

(To be continued)

"Philip de Albini,"

THE CRUSADER.

WHEN the Conqueror came over to England he brought with him a large train of Norman noblemen. One of the most distinguished of these was Robert de Todení, who traced his descent from Ivar, Jarl of the Uplanders of Norway, who flourished about 800. This Ivar was said to be descended from Formoter, King of the North, the mystic ancestor of Thor, from whom some of his descendants obtained the name of Thoeni, Toeni, Todení or Todenei.

Robert de Todení's son, William, assumed the surname of Albini. He was also known as Brito from having been born in Britain. From him are descended the present family of Daubeney. Various are the ways in which the name has been spelled: de Albineto, de Albineio, de Albini, d'Albigny, d'Aubigné, d'Aubinay, are only a few of the forms it has taken in the eight or nine hundred years that it has been borne by the descendants of William de Albini, Brito.

Robert de Todení was Standard-bearer to the Conqueror and high in favour with that monarch, who gave him numerous lordships and manors in various parts of the country. At the General Survey this powerful nobleman possessed no less than eighty extensive lordships; among others an estate in the county of Lincoln upon the borders of Leicestershire. Here he erected a stately castle and from the beautiful view it commanded gave it the name of Belvedere or Beauvoir.

Belvoir Castle has a world-wide fame and by some is considered, next to Windsor Castle, the noblest baronial residence in England. It remained in the possession of Robert de Todení's descendants for many years. In Henry the Third's reign, however, by the marriage of Isabel de Albini, the only child and heiress of William de Albini, with Lord de Ros, it passed to the possession of that nobleman, and eventually from the family of Ros it passed to that of Manners, and the feudal barony and castle of Belvoir still belong to the Dukes of Rutland.

From Ralph, second son of William de Albin, Brito, was descended the subject of this memoir, the Crusader, Philip Daubeney or, as he was generally called, de Albin.

William de Albin, feudal Lord of Belvoir, elder brother of Ralph, had a son also named William, and this latter was one of the twenty-five celebrated barons appointed to enforce the observance of Magna Charta. He seems to have changed sides several times, for he was an adherent of Richard the First and was with that monarch in the army in Normandy, and he was sheriff of the counties of Warwick and Leicester. At first, too, he was good friends with King John and obtained a special licence to make a park at Stoke, in Northampton, with liberty to hunt the fox and the hare, it lying within the royal forest of Rockingham. But soon disagreements rose between the king and his subjects, and William de Albin took up arms with the other barons, and leaving Belvoir well fortified, he, in accordance with the extraordinary document which the king issued, to the effect that the nobles were to annoy and harass him by all means in their power, such as taking castles and lands till he gave them satisfaction, assumed the government of Rochester Castle, it being delivered up to him by the archbishop to whom the king had confidentially intrusted it. However, there was no kind of property left in it; it was destitute of arms and provisions. The knights would have deserted it but for the powerful exhortations of William de Albin, and though they had so little provisions that they had to eat their horses, even the costly chargers, yet this bold baron and his adherents held out against the Royalists for three months and only surrendered when death by famine was the single alternative.

Matthew Paris relates that, "One day during the siege of Rochester Castle, the king and Savaric de Mauleon were riding round it to examine the weaker parts of it, when a cross-bow man in the service of William de Albeney saw them and said to his master, 'Is it your will, my lord, that I should slay the king, our bloody enemy, with this arrow which I have ready?' To this William replied, 'No, no; far be it from us, villain, to cause the death of the Lord's anointed.' The cross-bow man said, 'He would not spare you in a like case,' to which the knight rejoined, 'The Lord's will be done. The Lord disposes events; not he.'"

This circumstance was afterwards made known to the king,

who, far from emulating the magnanimity of the knight, did his best to hang his refractory vassal.

He was highly enraged at the gallant defence the besieged had made, the number of his troops that they had slain, and the money he had been obliged to spend upon the siege. In his furious anger he ordered all the nobles to be hanged upon the gibbet. It was with the greatest difficulty that John was dissuaded from putting this sanguinary order into execution. But at length the milder counsels of Savaric de Mauleon and other prudent men prevailed and the king, though unwillingly, listened to their advice. Most of the nobles, including William and Odinnell de Albini, were sent under close custody to be imprisoned in Corfe Castle. The soldiers were given up to his own soldiers to be ransomed, all but the cross-bow men, who had slain many of his knights and soldiers during the siege; some of these he ordered to be hanged.

William de Albini was detained at Corfe Castle until his freedom became one of the conditions upon which Belvoir capitulated.

The castle was in charge of William's youngest son, Nicholas, and he decided to save his father from a disgraceful death by surrendering it. A ransom of six thousand marks also had to be paid.

Among those barons whom the king, by false representations, induced the pope to excommunicate, were the two William de Albinis, father and son. These sentences of excommunication and interdict were published throughout England, and caused general consternation; the City of London alone treated them with contempt; the barons determined not to observe them and the priests not to publish them.

After John had subdued Rochester Castle he proceeded northwards, taking with him, among others of the disaffected barons, Philip de Albini; this was towards the end of 1215.

Philip, in like manner to his cousin William de Albini, seemed to have changed sides more than once. That he with other barons rose up against the king is scarcely to be wondered at when John's cruelties and exactions are remembered.

In the 8th of that monarch he was governor of Ludlow Castle, in Shropshire; six years afterwards he was made governor of the Isle of Jersey. Subsequently he was governor of the Castle of

Bridgenorth, and he obtained various territorial grants from the crown.

But when the king lost all sense of right and justice and ill-treated the people without distinction of class, Philip de Albin joined the barons and participated in the triumph of Runnime.

However, he changed his colours again and adhered to King John during the remainder of his reign. He was appointed teacher and instructor to the young prince, Henry of Winchester.

After John's death in 1216, he assisted at the coronation of the young king, then only eight years old. In 1217, he, with the two William d'Albinis, father and son, was among the army which assembled to fight Louis, son of the French king Philip, and the disaffected barons.

He was one of the principal generals at the battle of the Fair of Lincoln,* where the king's troops gained a decisive victory and took much treasure and plunder.

When Louis found he had been defeated he sent to his father for strong military aid. The king was afraid to give assistance to his excommunicated son, but laid the burden of the business on the wife of Louis. She promptly sent three hundred knights well equipped with supplies of war, and attended by a large body of soldiers.

The young King of England, by the advice of the grand marshal, deputed Philip de Albin and John Marshall, with the sailors of the Cinque ports and a large body of troops, to watch the seas carefully and look out for the approach of the French.

The French fleet was intrusted to the command of Eustace the monk, "a most disgraceful man and a wicked pirate." But his piratical notions did not serve him in good stead in this instance, for Philip de Albin with his cross-bow men and archers sent their missiles amongst the French to such effect that great slaughter was caused. Moreover, they had galleys peaked with iron, with which they pierced the ships of their adversaries and sank many of them. They also threw hot lime-dust on the sea, which, being borne by the wind, blinded the eyes of the French.

* This battle, which, in derision of Louis and the barons, they called "The Fair," took place on the 19th of May.

The latter, not being well skilled in naval warfare, were soon defeated ; many who were not slain threw themselves into the sea rather than be taken alive by their enemies. The French nobles who survived were taken prisoners, and the victorious English, towing after them the captured vessels, set sail for Dover. Among the prisoners was Eustace the monk, who offered a large sum for his life and liberty, but he was slain by John's illegitimate son, Richard. An immense amount of spoil was collected from the French ships ; it consisted of gold, silver, silk cloths and arms. The prisoners having been committed to safe custody, the victorious admiral, Philip de Albini, repaired to the king to tell him what he had done and the monarch immediately gave praise to the Lord for this heaven-sent glorious victory.

The chief result of this brilliant victory of Philip de Albini's was to found the English supremacy on the sea, which they have ever since held, but which prior to that had been enjoyed by the French, from whose domination he preserved England.

Another result of his victory was an agreement between Henry and Louis by which peace was concluded, and the French prince was only too glad to be allowed to leave England and return to his own country in safety.

The able Earl of Pembroke, who was Protector of the kingdom during the minority of Henry of Winchester, died in 1219, and in 1222 Philip D'Aubigni, "the English crusading knight, the valiant soldier of honourable and commendable manners, the most faithful teacher of the King of England," as one of the old chroniclers designates him, resigned his office of royal tutor, took his sword and lance and his trusty Norman shield, with its escutcheon of four fusils, and sailed for the Holy Land. Probably Philip de Albini would not have resigned his office of tutor to the king, who in the following year was declared of age to govern for himself, save for the disastrous tidings which reached England of the state of affairs in the Holy Land, by which Damietta, so hardly won, was lost to the Christians. He was inflamed with a just and righteous anger when he thought of the Cross, the holy symbol of the Christian religion, being torn down and desecrated by the Infidels. This powerful and victorious knight burned with enthusiasm to replace it in the Holy City, and go to the help and succour of his brethren of the Cross, whose gallant struggles

bade fair to be made of no avail by the incompetence and rapacity of one man.

In 1218 the Crusaders who were then in Palestine captured Damietta. The siege lasted seventeen months and both sides suffered severely from famine and disease. When the assailants forced their way in, the city was filled only with the dead and dying.

From the beginning of the siege nearly eighty thousand persons had perished miserably of disease and hunger. The stench was intolerable, the dead had killed the living, and the three thousand or so who yet remained alive were reduced to the direst distress.

Still, the city was taken at last by the soldiers of the Cross, and an immense amount of rich spoil was found, which was to be equally divided amongst the conquerors.

The Legate Pelagius, to whom so many of the ensuing disasters were due, threatened to excommunicate any one taking an unfair share, but in spite of this, as it is quaintly put, "greediness of the eyes made many thieves."

After the capture of Damietta the Crusaders might have obtained the cession of the Holy City and all Palestine to the Christians upon the simple condition of their evacuating Egypt. These terms were repeatedly offered to them by the two sons of Saphadin, Coradinus and Camel, who were now kings of Damascus and Cairo. The King of Jerusalem and the French and English leaders all eagerly desired to embrace the offer of the Sultans. But the obstinate ambition and cupidity of the surviving Papal Legate, Cardinal Pelagius, by holding out the rich prospect of the conquest and plunder of Egypt, overruled every wise and temperate argument in the Christian Councils and produced a rejection of all compromise with the Infidels.

After a winter of luxurious inaction the Legate led the crusading host from Damietta to Cairo, but he showed himself as incapable of conducting the war as he had been clamorous for its prosecution. It ended in disaster; while he vacillated, the Sultan's army obstructed the road to Cairo, the Nile rose and the Egyptians, by opening the sluices in the canal of Ashmoum, inundated the Christian camp, and the Crusaders found themselves suddenly inclosed on all sides by the waters and the enemy. They had only the choice of extermination by hunger,

the elements and the sword, or the disgraceful alternative of purchasing a peace, which they had lately refused to sell, by the surrender of Damietta. The Cardinal Legate humbly offered this price for permission to evacuate Egypt in safety. The Sultan of Cairo acceded to the prayer. The King of Jerusalem himself became a hostage for the performance of the treaty ; a free retreat to Damietta was allowed to the humbled and perishing remnant of the crusading host, and on their embarkation, that city was given up to the Infidels. The King of Jerusalem with his barons and knights then sailed to Acre, and the rest of the Crusaders retraced their homeward voyage to the shores of Europe.

Philip d'Albini, on the receipt of these tidings, set sail for the Holy Land. He arrived at Jerusalem safely after a prosperous voyage, without suffering any loss of property. But the state of affairs in the Holy Land caused great grief and indignation to the pious Crusader.

The letter he wrote to his old friend and companion in arms, Ralph, Earl of Chester and Lincoln, a Crusader who had returned to England after the capture of Damietta in 1218, is still extant. In it he tells how, after leaving Marseilles, they arrived before Damietta and there saw many ships leaving the town. How he spoke with a certain vessel, and made presents to the crew, and from them learned full particulars of the disastrous issue of the campaign led by the Papal Legate, which resulted in Damietta being given up and a truce for eight years being agreed to with the Sultan. Wherefore the Crusaders thought it best to make their way to Acre, as they did not wish to be present at the surrender of Damietta. In this letter he rates the force of the Christian army which advanced up the Nile, at a thousand knights, five thousand other cavalry and forty thousand foot.

Philip d'Aubeney, for the old chroniclers spell the name variously, spent several years in the Holy Land and eventually died there. Yet he seems to have returned to England, as will be shown later on, a Philip Daubeney being one of the knights sent into Gascony in 1225. During his residence in Palestine, which extended over some fourteen years, he took an active part in the stirring events of that period, and he lived to see what must have brought unfeigned joy to his pious soul and what many another gallant Crusader was not destined to witness, the

undisturbed possession, by the Christians, of Bethlehem and Nazareth, with free access to Jerusalem and the holy sites, in consequence of the remarkable treaty obtained by the Emperor Frederic II. of Germany. The Crusaders, not without reason, attributed the abortive and disgraceful results of the Legate's campaign, to the presumption and incapacity of Pelagius himself. The new pope, however, Honorius III., threw the blame upon the Emperor by charging to that monarch's continued evasion of repeated vows to join the crusade, all the disasters which his presence in the East might have prevented. Frederic was deaf to the Papal censures, until an occasion was afforded to Honorius of stimulating his zeal by the arrival from Palestine of Herman de Saltza, Grand Master of the Teutonic Knights, with a proposal for the marriage of the Emperor with Iolanta, daughter and heiress of John de Brienne, who, wearied of the ineffectual struggle against the Infidels, was willing to abdicate in her favour his titular crown of Jerusalem. The offer of the addition of this barren honour to his other dignities, dazzled Frederic; and the young princess being brought to Italy by her father, the Emperor received her hand, and for dower, the sovereignty of the Holy Land. Frederic engaged his honour to the Pope that he would within two years lead a powerful army to Palestine to achieve the re-conquest of his new kingdom. On one plea or another, however, he managed to delay this for five years, quarrelled with the Pope in consequence, and was excommunicated by Gregory the Ninth, the successor of Honorius.

While still labouring under that sentence, and in defiance of the hostility of the pontiff, Frederic embarked for Palestine with only a slender following in twenty galleys, which seemed so inadequate a force as to excite the wonder of his own age at the attempt; and his subsequent and rapid success, amidst every obstacle which the Pope, with unrelenting enmity, continued shamelessly to oppose to his enterprise, is still numbered among the unsolved problems of history.

Deserted by the flower of the Christian chivalry, for the Pope had prohibited the knights of the religious orders from serving under the banner of an excommunicated prince, Frederic boldly took the field against the Infidels, with the scanty force of his own soldiery, advanced from Acre, occupied and refortified Jaffa, and approached Jerusalem. He also gained from the Sultan the

celebrated treaty, by which free access to the Holy City, together with the possession of Bethlehem, Nazareth, and other places, was restored to the Christians and a peace for ten years was concluded between them and the Moslems. To signalize these honourable terms, Frederic resolved to celebrate his coronation at Jerusalem. Under a plea that he still remained excommunicate, the Patriarch refused to perform and the Templars and Hospitallers to attend the ceremony ; but accompanied by his own Teutonic knights and officers, the Emperor entered the Holy City, proceeded to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and himself taking the crown from the altar, placed it on his head.

Thus he brought the Fifth Crusade to a successful conclusion, having obtained for the Christian cause in Palestine more than the arms of any other prince had been able to achieve since the conquest of Jerusalem by Saladin.

But most of the fruits of his valour were lost when he returned to Europe, where his presence was necessary.

The Empress Iolanta had died in giving birth to a son, and Frederic's enemies insisted that her rights to the crown of Jerusalem had devolved, notwithstanding the existence of her child, upon her half-sister Alice, daughter of Isabella by the third marriage of that queen with Henry of Champagne. Alice, the widow of Hugh de Lusignan, King of Cyprus, having arrived on the Syrian shore from that island, to assert her title to the throne of Palestine, a furious civil war began between her partisans and those of Frederic.

The revolt of Palestine was at length composed, and the imperial authority restored chiefly by the good offices of Pope Gregory the Ninth, during the hollow reconciliation between that pontiff and Frederic, which had followed the arrival of the latter in Europe. But the dissensions of the Christians had prevented any union of their forces, and the Infidels renewed their predatory hostilities from every quarter. In one of these incursions, they surprised and slaughtered a body of several thousand pilgrims of the Cross on the road between Acre and Jerusalem ; and on another occasion the Templars were defeated in a campaign against the Emir of Aleppo, A.D. 1232, with the heaviest loss which their order had suffered since the fatal field of Tiberias.

Thus the fruits of Frederic's bravery were lost.

In spite of the Pope's prohibition to the knights of the religious

orders to fight under the banner of the excommunicated prince, several of them co-operated with him, indirectly at first and more openly later.

Philip d'Albini seems to have taken a prominent position in the stirring events of that time. That he did not remain in Palestine for the whole fourteen years—from 1222 to 1236, in which latter year he died there—would appear from the following. Matthew Paris relates that in the year 1225, William, Earl of Salisbury, Philip d'Albini, and sixty knights, were sent by the King of England to accompany his brother Richard into France. After a calm voyage they arrived at the town of Bordeaux, where they landed without any opposition. Informed of their arrival, the archbishop and the inhabitants received them with honour.

Richard ordered an assembly of the people in presence of the archbishop and the king's deputies, and delivered to them his brother's letters. In these Henry III. ordered his vassals to receive his brother well, and to give him aid and counsel so that he might recover the land which the French had conquered.

Those present all swore obedience to the King of England.

Then Richard, accompanied by the Earl of Salisbury, Philip d'Albini and numerous knights, advanced into Gascony, stopping at all towns and castles on the way.

When the lords of these places refused to do homage and swear fealty to the King of England, the invading knights besieged their castles and towns and reduced them by force of arms.

In this manner the whole of Gascony was conquered, a great many castles were seized, a large number of fugitives were killed, and a good amount of booty was taken.

Some authors seem to think that the Crusader remained in the Holy Land for the fourteen years from 1222 to 1236, and if this be so the Philip d'Albini sent into France must have been the Crusader's nephew and heir. Anyway, it is certain that the elder Philip d'Albini died in the Holy Land and received sepulture there.

According to one account, Philip d'Aubigni lived in Palestine for fourteen years, and died there in 1236, after fighting for the Lord during several pilgrimages to the Holy Land. He had long desired to be buried there, and he had his wish, for he was

entombed at the porch of the church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem.

Another Crusader was buried on the opposite side of the porch. This last tomb was, on good historical evidence, identified with that of one of the assassins of Thomas à Becket.

Both tombs were discovered about twenty-four years ago, when a large mass of masonry standing in front of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was removed.

The tomb of Philip d'Aubigni, "Crusader, soldier and scholar, who helped to secure England's Great Charter," is still in position and in excellent preservation.

The tomb of Becket's murderer has crumbled away to dust, leaving no vestige behind.

In this circumstance, strange enough if one remembers that both tombs were in position at Jerusalem only a few years ago, the curious and the superstitious may find a vent for their ingenuity in discovering the cause of so remarkable a coincidence.

There is another circumstance connected with the tombs of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre which is strange. It is to be presumed that Philip d'Aubigni's tomb was there in 1243, as the Crusader died in 1236. In that year (1243) Nedjm-Eddim, who had joined the Kharesmiens, a people whose lives were passed in war and plunder and who came from the farthest part of the East, crossed the Euphrates at the head of ten thousand combatants, who were divided into three parties under three generals. They despoiled all the country near to Damascus, then they advanced to Jerusalem, took it by storm and put all the Christians to the sword. The women and girls, having suffered every insult from a brutal, disorderly soldiery, were loaded with chains. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre did not escape their devastating hands; they partially destroyed it, and when they found nothing among the living to glut their rage, they opened the tombs of the Christians, took out the bodies and burned them.

It would seem as though some special Providence must have watched over Philip d'Aubigni's tomb where it stood in front of the great southern entrance of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, for it escaped all the vicissitudes which surrounded it at various times and is still in position in its post of honour guarding the entrance. Undoubtedly its being covered up by the mass of masonry conduced to its preservation; but that would hardly

have been there at the time Nedjm-Eddim desecrated the church and rifled the tombs of their contents to make a bonfire of them, it being only seven years after the date of the Crusader's death.

The tombstone is a flat black stone, just outside the great doors of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, with the following inscription :

* HIC IACET PHILANIVS DE
AVBIGNI : CVIVS : ANIMA RE
QVIESCAT : IN PACE : AMEN

Underneath is the coat of arms—three quatre fusils en fesse in a Norman shield, still borne by the Daubeney family.

Sir Charles Warren, who saw the tombstone when he was in Jerusalem, says that the stone and inscription were in admirable preservation in spite of having been trodden over for many years and having been placed in position between six and seven hundred years ago.

Philip de Albinus was not only a scholar and a distinguished warrior, he was also a great admiral, the founder of the supremacy of the English on the sea, previously enjoyed by the French.

The Manor of Great Grimsby, with all its appurtenances, was granted by Henry III., A.D. 1218, during the pleasure, to Robert de Vaux, to support himself in the king's service, and again shortly afterwards to Philip Daubeney for the same purpose.

Philip Daubeney, a few years afterwards, 6 Henry III., A.D. 1222, on the occasion of his going to the Holy Land, surrendered Grimsby to the king.

In the letter of liberate addressed to the Treasurer and Chamberlain in that year, the king refers to the surrender as of "Villa de Grimsby." This manor of Grimsby is now owned by William Heaford Daubney.

At South Petherton Church, in Somerset, there is the tomb of Sir Giles Daubeney, knight, and two of his wives, Joan, widow of John Beaumont, esquire, and daughter of John, fourth Lord Darcy and Meinill, and his second wife, Mary. His third wife, Alice,

* A sketch of this tombstone accompanies an article on it by Mr. Hanaeur, chaplain at Jerusalem, published in the Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement for April, 1887.

survived him. This Sir Giles died about 1445 at Barrington, co. Somerset, and was by his own desire buried in the Lady Chapel at South Petherton. This tomb is said to be one of the most perfect specimens in England.

Another of the same family, Giles, Lord Daubeney, sixth baron, who died in 1507, is buried in Westminster Abbey. This tomb is in a fine state of preservation; it bears the effigies of himself and his wife, carved in white alabaster, and forms one of the chief attractions of St. Paul's Chapel.

It is somewhat interesting to note that the military ardour which distinguished Philip Daubeney has descended to those who still bear his name; no less than seven of the family having taken part in the Crimean campaign. One of the survivors of these is the gallant officer, General Sir Henry Daubeney, G.C.B., who fought at Alma and Inkerman, and worthily sustained the reputation for valour gained long years ago by the renowned Crusader, Philip de Albini.

Lilian's First Love.

By E. A. R.

PART I.

"It may be June, but I feel very chilly. I should like a fire," said Lady Anna Carew to her eldest daughter Marcia as they entered the drawing-room of a pretty villa on the banks of the Thames.

"Shall I shut the window?" asked Marcia.

"Oh! no; I must have air, I feel so oppressed, and a room shut up in summer is always close; a fire and open windows are what I like."

Marcia looked anxiously at her mother as she passed her to ring the bell.

The two were very much alike, but with this difference, the mother had been and still was a beautiful woman, the daughter was only a nice-looking girl. She resembled her mother as a poor copy does a lovely original; there was something wanting.

But if Marcia knew this the knowledge did not trouble her; she was simple, honest and sympathetic, and of a thoroughly amiable disposition, with considerable penetration into character, and every one who came in contact with her felt that she was reliable, and realized that she was genuine.

When the servant had lighted the fire she left the room, and the two, seating themselves on either side of the hearth, began to talk. Marcia, being young, took the seat opposite the light and looked out upon the sunny lawn, which sloped down to the river, and Lady Anna, placing herself with her back to the light, looked at her daughter.

"You are anxious, mother," said the latter.

"A little, but the post will soon be here."

"I hear the bell ringing now," replied Marcia.

A minute more and the servant had entered with the letters. Lady Anna took those addressed to her and Marcia hers, as calmly as if the fate of one dear to them both did not depend upon an epistle expected that day.

The girl watched the servant out of the room, waited a moment, and then eagerly turned to her mother.

"Is it come—the answer, I mean?" Lady Anna held up a letter in reply.

"Don't read it yet, mother; wait till *she* is gone."

Lady Anna nodded assent—she seemed incapable of speech.

At that moment the door opened, and a gay young voice exclaimed:

"I'm off! Mrs. Holmes' carriage is coming up the drive."

"Come in, Lilian, and let us see you," cried Marcia; and then there entered the loveliest creature in the world, all smiles and freshness.

"How nice you look—how well that grey dress becomes you," said her sister, with undisguised admiration.

"I am glad you like it—my sober Quaker suit. Good-bye, mamma," and she turned her large blue eyes for one moment upon her mother, and was gone before Lady Anna had time to speak, even if she had wished to do so.

"She looks lovelier than ever to-day—but as she is gone, mother, now for the letter," said Marcia with a sigh.

Lady Anna opened the letter with trembling hands and read it slowly.

Marcia, all impatience and agitation, got up and went to the window whilst her mother was thus engaged; she waited long, she thought, and hearing no word, turned and looked round. Lady Anna was leaning back in her chair, the open letter in her hand upon her knee, in an attitude of grief, almost of despair. Marcia approached her; impatience was over—suspense—anxiety past; what she saw told her as well as words could tell what the answer was. She turned pale and her voice trembled as she said:

"I can see that the news is bad—poor Lilian!"

"Bad indeed! All that we heard is confirmed—more than I feared, even," answered the mother.

"What shall we do? it will break her heart. He is sure, quite sure? May I see the letter?" She held out her hand for it.

"No, dear child. I am sorry, but I must not show it, even to you. I have promised—I shall read it again once or twice, and then burn it. My poor darling! there is but one way out of this trouble; I am glad I know all I do; it helps me better to do my duty."

"Oh, mother! you don't mean to break it off—it will kill her! Think how she will suffer!"

"There is nothing else to do; she will suffer, I know, so shall I, so will you, but only for a time, I trust; whereas, if I let matters stand as they are she will be miserable, *we* shall be miserable *for life*."

"What, is it so bad as that?" said Marcia. "I can hardly believe it."

"Nor I; but one who knows him well confirms the report of his gambling, and testifies to the violence of his temper; these two facts are enough for me."

"And for me—still I am sorry," said Marcia, no longer able to restrain her tears.

"He has quarrelled with his father, but the property is entailed, so ultimately he must have it. Sir Thomas Drummond has paid his son's debts once, he will not do so again."

"Is he in debt, then? Does Mr. Elliot say so?"

"A gambler is always in debt—but it matters not, my dear Marcia; what this letter tells me (and you know I cannot doubt the writer) convinces me that I have but one course to pursue. Lilian and Herbert Drummond must meet no more."

Lady Anna did not choose to tell her daughter what other things were laid to young Drummond's charge; the present suffering she could endure—it would be nothing compared to the horror of seeing the beloved and lovely child bound for life to one destitute of principle and of ungovernable passions. She had but these two children, and Marcia had reached the age of twenty-three in possession of a large fortune—for she and Lilian were co-heiresses—without a love affair of any kind; adored by her female friends, approved and appreciated by everybody, she yet failed to take the fancy of man—how was it? Lady Anna could not understand it. She herself had had lovers before she was out, and offers unsought the moment she was seen; she was lovely, it is true, but then she was

penniless, and one of her sisters as handsome, or even handsomer, had remained single to this very day. What is it, she pondered, that makes some women so attractive to men, even when plain, and others, as good and true, utterly the reverse? Marcia, however, appeared to accept the state of affairs as perfectly natural; she seemed to desire nothing more in life than to be for ever as she was now, her mother's right hand, counsellor, confidant and companion. They had one common object in life, and that was Lilian; every plan had reference to her, every pleasure was connected with her: if she was glad, they were glad; if she was sad, they were sad. Her *début* in the world had been a great success, a triumph; their triumph! They had foreseen it, known it perfectly, and yet when it came they enjoyed it as if it were all unexpected. Every ball she went to was an excitement for them; mother and daughter talked over Lilian's partners, Lilian's looks, Lilian's flirtations, and Lilian's lovers with a zest and interest that never failed. Marcia seemed, as the French would say, to have effaced herself, and to live only in the life of this beauteous and most beloved sister.

When Herbert Drummond appeared on the scene, and made his way to that heart which so many would fain have appropriated, Marcia entered into her sister's happiness as if it were her own, shared all her doubts and fears before he had declared himself, and all her rapture when she knew herself beloved. Every step of the wooing had been discussed by her and her mother; they were both so absorbed in the little drama before them, that for once Lady Anna forgot to be prudent, and knowing Mr. Drummond to be socially a match for her child, she accepted Lilian's choice without a doubt, for what Lilian wished always seemed right in her eyes. She and Marcia revelled for a few days in their darling's happiness, and during that time Herbert Drummond seemed as perfect to them as to Lilian, when suddenly one day—what was it? a word, or look? Lady Anna never could remember, never knew who spoke, or what had been said or done; but her heart seemed to cease beating with a sudden fear, a doubt, an apprehension, as to whether it was all right. "What have I done?—but if there is anything wrong, it is not too late. I must find out, but how? Who will help me? who has warned me?"

She could recall no one, no word ; but a mother's instinct was her guide, and Lady Anna listened to its teaching, and learnt enough ere long to convince her that her Lilian was in peril.

She decided to leave London at once, and gave her daughters only a day's notice of her intention to go down to Riverside Farm, as her villa on the Thames was called. The girls wondered, but obeyed. Lilian welcomed the change, for Herbert would come down, of course, and now midsummer was at hand the garden would be delicious. Marcia was pleased since Lilian was content. Herbert Drummond was, perhaps, less satisfied ; he gathered from Lady Anna's manner that he was not expected to appear there unless invited ; and there was an ugly look on his fair young face when he took his leave of her. It had been said that he was a man of violent temper : Lady Anna saw his look and believed this then. But violence of temper was not the only fault found in Herbert Drummond ; graver errors were attributed to him ; and, full of anxiety and self-reproach, Lady Anna wrote to one upon whom she had the claims of a true friendship, to find out for her whether what she had heard was true or false, imploring him to spare her nothing, but to tell her the whole truth, and to rely upon her prudence and her honour, not to commit him as her authority. His letter was the one so anxiously expected by her and Marcia, who had been taken into confidence the day before. It was conclusive—there was proof abundant if desired—and it left Lady Anna no choice—there was only one thing to do, and she had to do it. Neither she nor Marcia slept that night, yet when morn came they welcomed it not, for it brought pain, anguish, despair with it.

Well, it was over ! She had been told, as gently as possible, as little as possible ; she had bowed her head unresistingly to the blow ; she had not rebelled, even in thought, against her mother's decision, for her love for Herbert Drummond had not so absorbed her as to kill all other affections ; and she never, for an instant, questioned her mother's love or judgment. She had implicit faith in both ; and she knew that the hearts of the two who loved her were as sorrowful as her own.

She consented to give up the engagement until she was of age ; after that, she could promise nothing ; and she stipulated

that she should see Herbert Drummond once more, and herself communicate this decision to him. Lady Anna thought this unwise ; but Lilian was determined : she would see him and tell him herself.

"The sooner the better, then," answered her mother with a sigh ; "I shall write and ask him to come down here to-morrow."

The morrow came, and with it Mr. Drummond, punctual to the hour named—a joyous, hopeful lover. He was wondrously handsome, and in spite of his very fair complexion and very fair hair, he had nothing effeminate about him. His eyes were almost as blue as Lilian's, his smile irresistible, Marcia thought, as he looked at her sister and led her into the garden. Lilian's cheeks were flushed, her manner unusually quiet and grave ; but it became her, as everything seemed to do.

Lady Anna and Marcia watched them with intense anxiety. They walked once round the lawn, lingered a little on the terrace walk overlooking the river, and then sat down on a garden-seat beneath a large and shady elm.

"Now she is going to tell him, Marcia, my child. We will not watch them any longer. Lilian is safe there ; we should hear the least cry, if he—was rough."

"Oh, mamma! you cannot think he would be," responded Marcia reproachfully.

"Not willingly—but I am told he cannot control himself when really angered."

Yes ; the mother was right. Lilian had not spoken about their engagement until they sat down ; she had tried, and felt she could not do it standing. She trembled all over, for she knew what his pain would be by her own ; and he noticed her agitation with surprise.

"You have some bad news, or something disagreeable to tell me," he said, a slight frown contracting his brows, which Lilian did not see—she was looking down.

"Alas! I have ; bad for you, for me," and then she told him. He heard her in speechless amazement. What! break off the engagement, barely a week old! for no reason but her mother's wish—when her mother had given her full consent before—a mere caprice! Was he to be the victim of it? Was he not good enough? He was an eldest son, and heir to his father's baronetcy ; but somebody had come forward, doubtless.

"No! no!" urged Lilian, with streaming eyes. "She is not actuated by worldly motives; she has other reasons—good ones, I know; she would never have tried me so, but for them. She knows that you are my choice—that I love you; and *she* loves me too well to act upon caprice."

"What are her motives, then?—her reasons? I am not to be taken up and let down again in this fashion without explanation, I can tell you," he cried sternly.

"Then you must ask her. I know nothing—I asked no explanation. I did not care to hear anything against you, if there was anything to hear. I should not have believed it," she said, taking his hand; "so it would have been useless telling me; but I felt that my mother had some strong reason for wishing me to end this great happiness. It is her first request. Can I refuse one who has never yet refused me anything?"

"If you have been told to choose between her and me, and you have chosen her, I have nothing more to say," he said angrily, rising as he spoke. He was not only hurt, but deeply offended.

"Don't be angry, Herbert; don't go——"

"Oh! I thought you loved me," she added piteously, as he freed his hand from her grasp.

He turned round fiercely; but his face relaxed as he looked down upon the beautiful imploring eyes upturned to him.

"Thought, Lilian? You knew it, you know it now—why torment me? I thought you loved *me*, but I see I was mistaken."

"Are you? then what brings me here to-day?" she said proudly, rising too from her seat, and looking at him with that frank, steadfast gaze which only the truthful can command. "Others could have borne my message had I wished it—if that message had meant, as you imagine, caprice, and parting for *ever*—but I came myself because (with a faltering voice) I *loved* you; and I wished to see you before we said good-bye for a time—after all, you know it was only for a time, only until I am of age. I promised nothing more; we have only to be patient."

"Patient! Lilian, you ask me the impossible!"

"But it is not long to wait," she urged.

"Not long! Two years and more—a lifetime! And to

wait for you—when I thought you would have been mine to-day!”

“It seems long, now, but——”

“Not long! an eternity. Oh! Lilian, if you love me half as well as I do, ask me nothing of that kind. Be firm! be true to me; be mine, now! this very day go with me! Your mother loves you too well to be angry long; do not sacrifice my life, my happiness, my well-being, for some whim, some false impression, some *untruths* told of me.”

He seized her hand, but she drew back, alarmed at his passionate violence.

“You will not. Where is your boasted love? Come with me, at least out of sight of the house. I cannot be calm whilst Lady Anna looks on and enjoys my misery.”

“Oh! Herbert, how can you imagine——”

“Forgive me. Oh! have pity, Lilian. I came here to-day all joy and hope; and you have dealt me blows—stabbed me to the heart, without remorse or——”

“Stay, Herbert! I will not——”

But he hurried her on, unheeding her protestations, until he reached a quiet spot overlooking the river; then, secure from observation, he threw himself on his knees, imploring her, conjuring her, not to give him up even for a day, but to fly with him there and then, to share his poverty until angry relations were appeased. She stood speechless, her colour came and went, her hands trembled, she turned to go, yet stayed—he thought he had triumphed, and approached her with looks of love and that smile no woman ever resisted, but she drew back from him.

“No, I cannot; you should not ask it—I must——”

“You will not?—then go—you have never loved me. I have been a fool.”

Turning from her in anger, his beautiful face disfigured by passion, he forced his way out through the bushes, and left her to tell her tale to her trembling, anxious mother, who had crept towards her in vague apprehension and sorrow.

Weeks passed away; and Lilian, who had struggled bravely with her poor sore heart for the sake of those she knew were sorrowing too, got thinner and paler; her beauty faded; the bright blue eyes grew dim; her face looked wan and pinched, but no word of complaint or hint of suffering passed her lips. Lady

Anna tried change of scene—London, Scotland, the seaside, visits to friends in country houses, every distraction or amusement that could be thought of—all to no purpose. The girl seemed silently fading away ; and doctors urged a warmer climate, lest cold should attack the weakened frame, and actual disease, which did not as yet exist, commence.

The winter found them settled at Mentone, where the perpetual sunshine, the entire change of life and novelty had the happiest results. Lilian seemed, for a time, to regain health and strength. She wandered over the hills with Marcia and a gay party of young people named Wentworth—whose personal acquaintance they had made in the hotel, but whose family was well known to Lady Anna—and in their society she had no time to be dull. Mounted on a sure-footed donkey, with sketch-book, wraps and botanical boxes, she would start in the early day, a large party surrounding her, Horace Wentworth leading her steed, Alice Wentworth by her side, Marcia and a dozen others behind ; all so gay, so good-humoured, that Lilian, from sympathy, fell into their humour, and forgot to think how much her heart ached, and how much she would give if *only* she and Herbert had not parted in *anger*. Lady Anna was radiant again ; and, when April came, home was talked of, with pleasure and regret at the same time, for the quiet, pleasant hours were now at an end.

Lady Anna, at last, got anxious to be off—she had heard the name of Herbert Drummond mentioned as a visitor to Monte Carlo. She felt that if he was there he was too near Mentone ; so she hurried her party away one day by Genoa, back to Turin ; and only felt safe when in the Paris train for Calais.

The improvement in Lilian was, unhappily, not of long duration. After two months in London all her old lassitude returned. Lady Anna therefore left town in the middle of the season, for the quiet and freshness of Riverside.

"Poor Marcia ! She will lose all her balls," said their friends.

"I am delighted," retorted Marcia. "I am tired of them ; am thankful to get away."

Lilian gave her such a smile of love and thanks ! worth fifty balls to her.

But the quiet of Riverside did their loved one no good. Marcia and her mother saw the colour leave the cheeks and lips

—the weakness increase—and a dread came over them both that they were to lose her.

Lady Anna wrung her hands in despair.

"She must live; she shall live! But, oh! Marcia, what a price to pay for her life!—to see her married to that man! He *was* at Monte Carlo, I hear, playing high, and living—well, no matter—. Dr. Forbes says she has something on her mind, and that it is killing her—so I must give way—but how can I consent when I know all I do?"

"Better that she should marry without your consent," observed Marcia quietly.

"My dear child, how can you say so?"

"Because—if she did so, you know she would lose almost all her money; it would go to you, and of course you could keep it or give it back, as you chose—meanwhile he would not have it; and I begin to think Lilian's fortune is a great attraction to him."

"I never thought of that; but Lilian would never marry him against my wishes. I shall have to consent, that is, appear to do so—for, in my heart, I never can."

What Marcia had stated was quite true; Mr. Carew had added a clause to his bequest to his second daughter, that, in the event of her marrying whilst under age, without her mother's sanction and approval, she was to receive an annuity of five hundred a year only, and her fortune would pass to her mother. He had perfect confidence in his wife's judgment and justice, and he feared that Lilian, with her beauty, might be drawn into an engagement when too young, and before she had seen enough of life to understand what she was doing; for Marcia he had no such fears—she was nearly twenty when he died, and he saw that her character was a singularly strong one, and her judgment sound.

A few days later Lady Anna startled the invalid by asking her if she had any wish to see Herbert Drummond again.

Lilian's pale face flushed all over, for a few minutes she could not answer; she looked down, and her mother, in pity for her blushes, rose and took a book up from the table.

"Well, Lilian, do you wish it?"

"Yes, mother, I do. We parted in anger, and I have always wished to remove a false impression he formed of me."

"Then you shall do so to-day. I have written to him ; he is coming——"

"Oh, how good you are."

Lady Anna's heart ached when she saw a look of unmistakable gladness on her child's face. She sighed ; she could not help it. Lilian heard, and knew what it had cost her.

"Mamma, do not be afraid ; I shall keep my promise," she said.

"I exact none, only be happy, and get well," was the reply.

A few minutes later, Herbert Drummond was there, holding her thin hands in his, pouring out passionate assurances of love and devotion, and looking as young and handsome and gay as when he first won Lilian's heart. Absence had not blanched his cheek, nor marked a line on his smooth fair brow. He was shocked at the change in her, but he had been told not to let her know that he perceived it ; and, although touched at the proof of her attachment to him, he forbore to allude to it. To tell the truth, he would rather have been without such a proof ; he would have liked better to have her blooming and lovely as of old, even if it implied less affection for him that she should be so. The necessity for care and consideration for one so fragile, he felt was a bore, or at any rate would be, if she did not improve soon, but of course she would, loving him as she must ; and now that all would go smooth—for of course Lady Anna's objections must be set aside, in view of the state of Lilian's health—and he should carry off the rich and beautiful prize, more desirable to him than ever, not only because he loved her, as much as it was in his nature to love any one long, but for other reasons that made a rich wife an absolute necessity to him, he was radiant, triumphant.

"Oh, Lilian," he said, "how I bless you for sending for me. I did not deserve it. I left you in anger."

"Yes, Herbert," she answered gently ; "you misunderstood me ; you would not wait to listen—I had something to tell you ; but first let me say *I* did not send for you ; it was wholly mother's doing. I did not know she had written to you until you were here."

"It was awfully good of her. I did not expect——"

"You were not just to her ; but you did not know her."

"Well, Lilian, you know people had said to me that she would never let you marry if she could help it."

"But why?"

"Oh, can't you understand? Fortune going away, and, of course, it *is* odd that Marcia, who is not bad-looking, has not married with her fortune."

"And you could believe such infamous insinuations, Herbert?"

"Of course not—never! until you broke it off on account of her *unknown* objections; and then, you must own, it looked odd, darling," he said soothingly.

"Perhaps it did," she answered languidly, falling back in her chair.

"And as you would not marry without her consent, and she would not give it, what was I to think?"

She did not answer him for a few minutes; she was recalling different things, remarks that had been made to her, trifling occurrences that had seemed strange, but might be now explained. Well, what did it signify? How little they all knew.

"And was it for that reason, you urged me to elope with you, to marry you without her consent?"

"Yes, darling; how could I consent to wait for what I knew I never should have?"

"And do you know, Herbert, what would have been the consequences of my marrying you without my mother's consent?"

"I can guess—can imagine—but a little time and patience would have put all straight."

"You do not know," she said gravely; "I was going to tell you that day. Oh! you thought I was only thinking of myself, that my love was weak, when it was that I feared to spoil your life. At one moment I could have gone with you, have forgotten all I owed my mother, but that fear, fear for *you*, held me back. Oh! if I could only have told you; then I should not have had this feeling, that you doubted my love, thought me weak, selfish, that has so long weighed me down all these weary months."

"But, Lilian, darling, how should I have suffered with you?"

"Perhaps you would not have cared, perhaps I am wrong to think you would, but," she added hurriedly, as if half ashamed of what she had to say, "I ought to tell you that if I marry you

before I am of age, without mamma's consent and approval, I lose all my fortune—all but a small annuity."

"Damnation!" The word was on his lips, but he restrained himself in time.

"What a danger I have escaped!" he thought, while he took her two hands in his, and bent his head low over them to hide the look of surprise and dismay he knew was on his face, and then whispered softly:

"How wise and good you were! But now we will have Lady Anna's consent, my own love."

"And if not, Herbert?" she said anxiously.

"Why, then, I must wait for you till we can do without it."

She turned her head away; there were tears of joy in her eyes.

"It is false, then," she said to herself; "all they said is false; I knew it must be."

What had she heard? Who had ventured to trouble her trust and confidence? No word had ever passed the lips of her mother or Marcia since the day she and Herbert had parted, and yet the disturbing sounds of ill-report had reached her; but now the sunlight of his love and presence dispersed them, and the look of youth and happiness was on her face again. She had put herself right with him and he was right with her.

Herbert Drummond went to call Lady Anna with a glad heart; he thanked her simply but warmly for her concession. It was impossible not to be won by the charm of his manner, and, in spite of herself, Lady Anna felt softened; and if he was to be the means of restoring her child to health, she would forget all she had heard, in very gratitude, and for Lilian's sake strive to welcome him even as a son-in-law. He had the tact to make his visit short and to let it be understood that his future visits would be regulated by Lady Anna's invitations, not by his own wishes. She was glad when he went, but was repaid for what had been so repugnant to her by seeing Lilian look brighter and better than she had seen her for weeks.

Lilian, nevertheless, was over-excited, and her rest that night was broken and disturbed. Herbert Drummond's voice seemed always to awaken her, and his presence ever near her, only to vanish when she opened her eyes. Towards dawn she slept

better, and then she dreamt a long, connected, vivid dream. She found herself suddenly (as one does in dreams) standing upon, or, rather, ascending the broad stone steps that led up to the portico of a large building. She was clad in white from head to foot, long soft robes of silk seemed to train after her, and a veil of lace shaded her face from the hot sun, which she could feel above her. As she moved on upwards, she noticed that she wore white satin slippers, and then she said, "This is my wedding day; where are all the rest?" She glanced round—there were people looking on, but they were strangers. She went on towards the church, for church she felt it was, although one she had never seen before. The steps and the portico reminded her of the Madeleine at Paris, yet she knew she was in England, and the resemblance vanished as she approached the open door. She was about to enter, when some one—a woman with a pale, sad face—rushed forward and stood in front of her as if to bar her progress. Lilian looked at the poorly-clad figure and the wan, but still beautiful, face, and waited an instant for her to speak; but before she could do so, a voice cried:

"Stand aside, woman, and let the bride pass."

Then the woman said, "Do not go, lady; turn back—turn back; there is yet time."

Lilian felt spellbound, powerless to speak or move.

Then it seemed to her that out from the crowd came Herbert Drummond, who seized her hand to lead her on; but the woman stood in their way.

"Do not go; do not; you cannot have him. *I* am his wife—his wife!"

"You lie, wretch!" cried Herbert's angry voice; and Lilian turned from the woman to look at him. His face was livid with rage, a wicked, cruel look disfigured him. Oh! how cruel his eyes looked. Lilian was horror-struck; she strove to speak, but no words came; she would have fled, but her feet seemed chained to the ground. Then suddenly all was confusion. What was it? Was there a blow struck? Did he strike her?—that poor pale woman—or did he only push her aside? How was it that she fell so heavily on the hard stone pavement, striking her head against the base of a column in her fall? Oh! God—what horror! Lilian, in her agony, made one frantic effort, and a loud cry—"Herbert! what have you done!" burst from her lips, as

she bent over that prostrate form and saw the still, pale face senseless, or lifeless it might be ; then all was dark to her.

A loud shriek of anguish and terror startled every sleeper in the house. What was it? Where was it? Marcia was at her sister's bedside in a moment, and in another Lady Anna was there too—their hearts guided them.

Lilian was half out of bed, pale and trembling, calling to some one.

"Is she hurt? What—dead! Ah! no, not dead—he did not strike her! He did not mean to hurt her—he could not."

"Marcia! mother! are you there? Where am I? What is it? What has happened?"

"Nothing, dearest, nothing; you have been dreaming, that is all; lie down again and rest; it is——"

"Dreaming!"

"Yes, my love; you must have been dreaming. You see it is broad daylight—there is nothing to fear; but lie down again, dear."

"You may all go. Miss Lilian has had a bad dream—nothing more," said Lady Anna to the frightened servants, who had crowded into the room, roused by that scream of terror.

Lilian was now quite awake; but she seemed stupified. Marcia and her mother together placed her in bed, and watched beside her until she grew calm again; but they looked at each other and the same question, although unspoken, seemed to pass between them.

What had caused this sudden fear—this cry of terror? Only a dream. Could it be so? Could a mere dream cause such a shock to the whole nervous system, as the doctor declared something had done, when he paid his usual visit some hours later?

Lilian herself was silent, and the doctor ordered, as they always do when they don't understand a case, perfect rest and quiet; so no inquiries were made of her of the cause of her fright. She did not, however, follow his injunctions and remain in bed; but she kept her room, sitting with some work in her hands, which, as Marcia quietly observed, made no progress, or with her eyes fixed upon a book, the leaves of which were never turned.

But after a few days this preoccupation seemed to pass away, and a more healthy and natural interest in things around her was

evident, to her mother's delight, who now expected to see her return to her usual habits. In this hope, however, she was disappointed. Lilian could not be induced to leave her room. During this time, Herbert Drummond's anxiety and distress had been such that even Lady Anna's heart softened to him. They had a trouble in common, and, therefore, at least one subject of sympathy; and where one sympathizes one cannot, at any rate, be at enmity. Softened towards him, she allowed herself to be influenced by the charm of his manner, and began to think that in time she might even like him as a son-in-law. He had immense tact, and always terminated his visits before they could be thought to be more than just commenced.

He sent many loving messages to Lilian, which she received in silence, and did not reply to. Lady Anna and Marcia could not understand her. They began to feel sorry for Drummond, who every day asked when he might see her, and would not believe that she sent him no word of love to comfort him. He suspected that some influence was at work against him; and at last Lady Anna, who could scarcely avoid seeing what his suspicions were, spoke to Lilian, and told her it was time now either to see, or write to Mr. Drummond, whose daily visits of inquiry were becoming a difficulty to her.

"Well, mother," she answered, "I will write to him, and—see him—if he should wish it."

"He will certainly be here to-morrow," said Lady Anna nervously.

"I will write to-night," replied Lilian calmly.

The letter went; and next day, rather before his usual hour, came Herbert Drummond. He found Lady Anna alone in the drawing-room. There was a dark look upon his handsome face as, after a stiff greeting, he said:

"This, my lady, is, I presume, your doing," handing her a letter.

"Certainly not—I have not even seen it, nor have I the slightest knowledge of its contents."

He bowed with a look of disbelief, as he said: "It would probably have met with your approval if you had seen it."

"Perhaps," rejoined Lady Anna stiffly as she took the letter from him. "Lilian is never likely to write, or do anything I could disapprove." She was offended by his suspicion of her,

after the confidence she had shown him, the concern she had felt for him.

"Exactly; you think alike upon all subjects *now*, it appears, although you once differed about the unworthy individual before you."

Lady Anna drew herself up, and standing before him with the letter in her hand, she said:

"We may have differed once, but from the moment I sanctioned your engagement to my daughter, Mr. Drummond, I have been loyal to you in every sense of the word."

She turned away from him, and began to read:

"Thanks for all your kind messages—your many visits. I am quite well now. I could see you, but I must say that to you first which will make it perhaps wiser if we do not meet again at present. Dear Herbert, for I must call you so once more, during this past week I have thought about things more justly, I am sure, than I ever did before, and I see that I ought not to force my mother's consent, against her convictions, to an engagement I promised to renounce until I was of age; neither ought I to hold you bound to one whose health makes even life, now, uncertain. I will never consent to do so. Try, therefore, to forget all that has passed between us—try to think kindly of me—and if this letter pain you, forgive me—I suffer too.

"LILIAN CAREW."

Lady Anna's eyes became suffused with tears as she read Lilian's allusion to her health. Could an idea of her own danger have influenced her decision? For a moment this fear disturbed the secret joy with which the letter had filled her. If she was to be saved only at the price of becoming Herbert Drummond's wife, was not the cost too great? If Lilian herself rejected the alternative, should she demur, when her mother's instincts warned her of another danger? What after all was life worth if robbed of all that makes it worth living for—respect for, trust in those dear to us? And what would Lilian's future be when she found, as she would find, if she married Drummond, that there was no true metal in the chain she had forged for herself; that it was a base low imitation, and yet one that bound her fast in

fetters of disappointment, distrust and perhaps despair? If Lilian's own fears, own doubts, had made her pause now, it was not for her mother to hinder a decision, in truth only too grateful to her, and yet Lady Anna could not but wonder at the sudden change—the cooling perhaps of a love that seemed so deep and strong. What had—what could have caused it?

She handed the letter back to him in silence, she had no wish to hurt him further by telling him what she felt.

"You are surprised, I see—perhaps a little sorry for me after all."

"Yes, Mr. Drummond, I am sorry, very sorry for you—and I am also surprised."

"But you think Miss Carew is right?"

"I do." Lady Anna knew by his calling her Miss Carew instead of Lilian that he had accepted his dismissal. A sense of victory makes one feel generous, so she said. "If you wish to see my daughter, I feel I have no right to refuse the interview, but I hope you will not ask it—she is not strong yet."

"Do not distress yourself; I shall not ask it. I consider this my second dismissal decisive." He bowed low as he folded and placed the letter in his pocket. "Yes," he said, with a bitter laugh, "I shall keep this *inspired* document to show how easily we men are duped, lured on to the very edge of the cliff and then—*remorselessly thrown over.*"

"Mr. Drummond, it has not been so, you know it—you know that she, my child, was only too true to you—that she was—and she is——" here Lady Anna checked herself; in her indignation she was going too far. Why should she speak to him of Lilian's love? it were best for him that he should cease to believe in it; why should she deny her influence? it was best for him that he should continue to believe in that, unjust as it might be to her on this occasion. Let him think what he liked after all; what did it matter whether his opinion of *her* was unfair or not. So she paused and left her sentence unfinished.

He waited with a mocking smile, but as she continued silent, he finished it for her.

"Your child, Miss Lilian Carew, is a most dutiful and loving daughter."

His manner irritated Lady Anna.

"You are bitter and you are unjust," she said, "but it is natural you should be so—I feel you have some cause to think yourself ill used."

"Some cause!" he exclaimed, his long suppressed passion bursting forth. "Some cause—fooled; duped; taken up and thrown over. Good God! that I should have allowed myself to be treated so twice, by a spoilt capricious girl."

"Mr. Drummond, let me ——"

But he would not allow her to speak.

"You dismissed me, Lady Anna, without the explanation which was my due. I bowed to my fate; I accepted it in silence—I returned at your summons, full of happiness and confidence. How was I to know that it was a mere fancy of a sick child; a whim to be gratified for a moment; that I was to be a plaything, to be broken again, when its novelty was gone?"

"Mr. Drummond, be calm. If you only knew how deeply I regret it all."

He could hardly restrain himself, but even in his passion he was too much of a gentleman to use bad language to a lady.

"Regrets! regrets!" he exclaimed in angry tones, "what are yours to mine? Insulted, made a fool of—the laughing stock of the town."

"Ah," thought Lady Anna, "he is more offended than wounded." She took courage; it is so much easier to soothe hurt self-love than console a suffering heart.

"Nay, Mr. Drummond, your position is not that; why should it be? The circumstances of this rupture need not be known beyond ourselves. My daughter's health is, alas! reason enough for you to give, where you feel a reason must be given. I cannot refuse to let you make use of that plea, if you wish to do so; let us not part more unhappily than we need; believe me, I do feel for you." She held out her hand in token that she wished the interview ended. Her gentle manner somewhat calmed him; he rose and took his hat, but stood a few minutes irresolute, without taking the proffered hand, then said:

"I have been badly treated, and at present I can neither forgive nor forget."

With these words he left the room, and Lady Anna remained standing where she was until the clatter of his horse's hoofs on the

hard road outside roused her, then she sank into a chair thankfully exclaiming :

"So that is all over ! and *for ever*."

PART II.

WHEN Herbert Drummond left Lady Anna's presence he was in a towering passion ; the violent language he would not utter before her came rolling out in passionate tones as he rode off, and seemed to relieve his feelings, although it was addressed to no one in particular, for after a bit he burst into a fit of laughter and exclaimed :

"Good Lord ! what an idiot I am to storm away because they have done my work for me. I must have got out of this affair. A sick wife and uncertain income was not my view when I did Miss Lilian the honour to fall in love with her, which I certainly did at first, and I would have married her then, mother-in-law and all, but now I can't afford it—well, they have settled it. They can't blame me—it's just as well as it is."

So he consoled himself as he rode on, feeling moreover rather sore, in spite of himself, and rather sorry, although he wanted to end the engagement, at all being at an end between him and the Carews.

His chief consideration, however, when he grew calm, was how to let his own friends know without the outside world learning that his engagement was at an end. It would be highly inconvenient to him if certain people should hear that there was no immediate prospect of a rich wife for Herbert Drummond. He should have to be careful, very careful, what he said, or did. At the same time he intended to give his version first in his own immediate circle, in a way that would permit of no questions being asked or make explanations necessary.

He dined at his club, and for a wonder met no one he knew there, so he went home to his rooms and looked over his evening engagements.

One of the first cards that met his eye was Mrs. Mauleverer Mark's for one of her Thursdays "at home."

This lady was a rising star in the gay world that receives and

entertains. Her husband was said to be of Eastern origin, whatever that may mean, and his wife's parties were certainly Oriental in their splendour and luxury. People who went once out of curiosity to see the house, returned because they found it pleasant ; her parties began to be talked about, balls, theatricals, always something going on, and this naturally made Mrs. Mauleverer Mark's acquaintance desirable to most people ; but Herbert Drummond had never as yet availed himself of any of her invitations. This night, however, he would honour her—and an honour he really considered his presence at her ball would be ; it is true royalty had been seen at one of Mrs. Mark's *fêtes*, but then, as Lancelot de Vere observed, "Royalty can go where we cannot."

"I shall meet," thought Drummond, "none of my own intimates, but lots of fellows I know who will do my work for me."

He went late, of course ; and found himself very well amused and surprised to see what a number of nice-looking people there were in the world who were not in his set. He did not dance, he was not inclined to do so, but stood about exchanging a word now and then with an acquaintance. The opening of the supper-room had somewhat thinned the crowd of dancers, when a friend, Alfred Hervey, a young Guardsman, came up to him.

"You have the devil's own luck, I declare, Drummond. Here's Miss Drayman, the great American heiress, asking who you are, and wishing you to be introduced to her."

"Really ? Very nice of her."

"Come along, then ; I have promised to present you."

"But wait a bit. What is she like, and who is she ?"

"Don't be an ass—as if you did not know. Come on."

"'Pon my honour, Alf, I never heard of her."

"Why, she is always here."

"And I—never—until to-night."

"Oh ! Well, then, she is a real *bonâ-fide* heiress. Old Drayman, who, I believe, was actually a drayman or carrier, made two or three fortunes and lost them—'struck ile,' as they say, sold his land for a fabulous sum, and then died before he'd time to ruin himself again."

"An heiress ! and an orphan ! sent to console me for Lilian !" thought Drummond as he followed Hervey.

"It's very good of me," said Alfred in a whisper, "for I'm spoony on her myself ; but I know you're safe—engaged to the Carew."

Here was the very opportunity Herbert wanted.

"No, I am not, *mon cher* ; that's all over."

"The devil it is !" exclaimed poor Hervey with a changed face, adding, as he stopped Drummond a moment :

"Since when ? and why ?"

"Since to-day—her health—she is in a deep decline—but I don't know what business it is of yours."

It was with a grave face that Hervey performed the office of introduction ; whatever his own chances as a suitor might be, he had no wish to see Herbert Drummond carry off this bright, pretty girl, for whom he had a real regard—and through his means too : he was annoyed, and left the ball-room.

In the meantime the two new acquaintances got on famously. Miss Drayman was clever, well educated, and had all that self-possession which her young countrywomen acquire early, and English girls take years to attain. It enabled her, consequently, to see more, and utilize her opportunities better than her fair English rivals could. Her life had been a gay and happy one ; her father's temporary reverses had never affected her ; and except his death, which she felt deeply, she had only one regret or disappointment in life, and this was, that she had not been born fair instead of dark. She adored blondes, and envied every fair-haired girl she saw. Drummond's appearance immediately attracted her attention ; she had watched him all the evening, and judged that he considered himself somewhat outside the company Mrs. Mark had assembled. She was determined to make his acquaintance ; but no one knew him well enough to present him, and Mrs. Mark was too much occupied, until Hervey, the devoted admirer, appeared on the scene. She had observed the little discussion.

"Confess that you would not be introduced till you saw what I was like," she said, after a time, laughingly.

"On the contrary. I was asking who the lovely sylph with the sibyl's face was, when Hervey offered to present me."

"Story-teller !" she exclaimed, flattered nevertheless. "I watched you for ever so long, and you never once looked at me."

"But I felt it; I knew it; there was a spell that bound me to this room. I couldn't understand what it was that kept me here when I was so bored; now I know—*your* lovely eyes were upon me."

"Do you think I mesmerized you?"

"I am certain of it; I shall never be master of my own actions again—in your presence."

She laughed outright—he amused her at once.

"Well, then, obey me now by taking me in to supper; I am real hungry, I am."

Of course Drummond devoted himself to the young American for the rest of the evening. When he put her and her aunt, Mrs. Cotes, into their carriage, she said:

"Come and see us to-morrow in Brook Street: luncheon at two. By-the-bye, you are only *Mr.* Drummond, are you?"

"Why do you ask?"

"I thought you looked as if you had got a title, that's all."

"If a title would be any recommendation to me, perhaps I may as well say that I shall have one some day."

"Oh! you are very nice as you are," she answered in perfect good faith.

The Carews went abroad again, almost directly after Drummond's last visit, and spent their summer and autumn in Switzerland and at the Italian lakes. Winter found them settled again at Mentone, looking forward with eagerness to the arrival of the Wentworth family. The eldest son, *their* invalid, had died at Cannes, and whilst matters were being arranged there they were to be for a time at Mentone, before returning to England.

On a bright, glorious morning—one of those days that make us forget it is winter on the Riviera—Alice Wentworth was sitting with Lady Anna beside the open window of her room in the Westminster Hotel. She liked to be with her just now, in preference to joining the others in their walks and excursions; her brother's recent death had saddened her, and she found Lady Anna's sympathetic companionship soothing and more congenial.

"How well Lilian looks. Lovelier than ever," she said.

"She has quite recovered both health and spirits," answered the glad mother smiling.

"In spite of Herbert Drummond's engagement, which I see announced in all the papers."

"I believe that she was thankful to see it; she was so afraid he would claim her when of age. She got better from the moment she heard of it," replied Lady Anna.

"The marriage is to be very soon—one day this month, I heard; Horace will know."

"The bride is very pretty, I hear," said Lady Anna.

"And very rich—which is more to the point with Herbert Drummond," observed Miss Alice disdainfully.

"But tell me, dear Lady Anna. What happy event made Lilian break off the engagement—for, of course, she did it?"

Lady Anna's answer was stopped by a knock at the door, and the entrance—most unexpected to both—of Horace Wentworth. He should not have arrived for another fortnight; and Alice as well as Lady Anna were delighted with this surprise.

"Where have you come from? and how did you get here?" was the question from both.

"Straight from London, and by train as fast as I could. I suppose, Alice, I can have a room in this hotel?"

"I hope so. I will see the manager at once, and order you some breakfast. How surprised the rest will be."

"Where are they all?"

"Gone up the hill to Castlelar."

"I'll go and meet them when I have refreshed myself."

Alice Wentworth left the room, and then the young man went over to Lady Anna, and took a chair beside her.

"Can you guess? Have you the least idea why I have come so much before I was expected, dear Lady Anna?"

"A natural wish to be with your dear mother again, after her trial, I suppose."

"I am afraid it was a more personal selfish motive brought me," he answered smiling.

"Not a selfish one, I am sure," she replied.

"It is kind of you to say that—but if you knew—I should like to tell you—consult you."

"Then do so, my dear Horace; if I can help you, I will."

"You can help me better than any one, out of my troubles—my difficulties—can tell me what to do."

"Difficulties!" said Lady Anna with a puzzled air. "I am not much of a woman of business. I am afraid I cannot advise you well."

"Oh! my difficulties are not of a pecuniary kind. Poor Arthur's death has made me a rich man. They are purely personal."

"Then why not go to your dear mother? You could not have a better adviser."

"In this instance I could. Mothers are too partial. Besides she would not know. I mean she could not tell me what you can—advise me so well."

"I am at a loss to imagine," began Lady Anna, and then stopped short and looked keenly at him. His colour came and went, he bent down, moved uneasily in his chair, and then looking up at her, a little smile met her glance as she exclaimed:

"Ah! now I understand. I am to be the confidant of an affair of the heart."

"Oh! if I might confide in you—if you would help me—speak for me."

"But tell me what you wish me to do or say, and to whom. Only tell me. You know I am your friend."

"Thank you a thousand times for that kind word. Perhaps you *have* seen—known all along—that I have loved your dear daughter ever since last year? But then I was only a younger son, with small prospects and no fortune. What chance had I? What right to aspire to such beauty, goodness and fortune? It was natural you should look for someone far above me. My poor brother's death has altered all that. Have I your permission to stay? May I venture, do you think, to try my chance? It may seem soon to you—too soon—after poor Arthur's death, but—— You are silent. Oh, I see you think I ought not to——"

"No, no, dear Mr. Wentworth; I don't think that. You have my glad permission. I wish you success from the bottom of my heart, only perhaps it is a little too soon for *her* although she has quite got over that affair—quite overcome a feeling which was more in her imagination, I believe, than in her heart."

"I thought she was quite free—had never——"

"Certainly she is," said Lady Anna hurriedly; "but you know yourself what has happened."

"I do not know. I did not know anything had ever happened. I thought she had never been engaged."

"Dear Mr. Wentworth, surely you knew—every one knew—that for a short time Lilian and——"

"Lilian!" he cried. "I am speaking of Marcia."

"Marcia!" she exclaimed, rising from her seat in very amazement.

"Yes, Marcia, whose unselfish devotion to her sister, unconsciousness of her own beauty, talents and goodness, won my heart as soon as ever I knew her, and she is so like you—perhaps not quite so beautiful. But, oh! do speak!"

Lady Anna really could not for a moment, but she took the young man's face in her two soft hands and gave him a loving kiss on both his cheeks, and then at last saying, "Oh, I am too happy!" ran out of the room to have a good cry.

Just then Alice returned to tell her brother that both his room and breakfast were ready.

"All right; I'm ready too," he said, jumping up and giving her a hearty kiss. "I'll come back as soon as I'm 'fixed up,' as the Americans say."

"Horace, what spirits you're in. I do believe you are glad to come back to us all."

"Right you are, my dear. And after two beastly fogs in London, this sunshine is jolly."

He was just off, when he turned back and said:

"By-the-bye, Alice, do you think that they have got room in this hotel for Alfred Hervey, who is going to Monte Carlo, and I want him to come here instead?"

"We can but ask. When does he come?"

"In a few days. But don't trouble; I'll see about it myself."

So he went off to his breakfast, and after he had changed his travelling dress he had another little interview with Lady Anna before starting in search of the walking party. Alice offered to go with him, but he refused her company, so she, nothing loth, remained with Lady Anna, hoping to renew their interrupted conversation; but she found Lady Anna terribly *distracte*, disin-

clined to talk herself, but listening with interest to her chatter about Horace, her delight at having him, and her praises of his character. *He* had the good fortune to meet those he went to find, and was greeted with rapturous exclamations of surprise and pleasure at his unexpected appearance, and had to give the history of his journey, &c., all over again. After a bit he declared he was tired, and must rest under the shade of the olive trees. Marcia remained to keep him company, and there in that sweet spot he asked her the question he had come so far to have answered, and which did not surprise *her* as much as it had done her mother.

When Alfred Hervey arrived a few days later, he said to her:

"Mentone agrees with you. I never saw you look so well, Miss Carew."

"And yet," said Lilian slyly, "they say she has a complaint of the heart."

"I thought that was *your* case," retorted Marcia.

"I am cured," she answered, blushing, and escaping from the room.

"Thank goodness she is," said Hervey gravely. "I wonder what poor pretty Delphine will do. You have heard, I suppose, what happened at the wedding?"

"No. Please tell us," from a chorus of voices.

"Very well, only don't ask me to describe the bride and the dresses; the *Court Journal* will do that. I've got it somewhere. I was obliged to go, Delphine—Lady Drummond, I mean—made such a point of it. Poor thing! His getting the title just after she had made his acquaintance finished the business."

"His poor father!" said Lady Anna with a little sympathetic sigh.

"Ah, yes, Sir Thomas—a good old chap; but he knew of the marriage, and was pleased. But to go on: The wedding was over; it was at St. Jude's, the church with the Grecian portico and flight of steps up to it, you know."

Here Marcia started a little.

"I was just outside the door, waiting to see the bride come out. There was a great crowd of people everywhere, waiting like myself. At last they came. She was looking lovely—so bright and gay—and seeing me was just about to speak to me, when a

woman rushed out of the crowd up to Drummond and said something to him. I was looking at his wife, so I did not see him, but I am told he turned as white as a sheet, and said, 'Get out of my way, woman!' trying at the same time to push past her, but she took hold of his arm and called out, 'I am his wife! his true wife!' I saw Delphine turn her head round; then there was a scuffle and confusion—some one pulled the woman away, or he pushed her. God only knows how it happened!—but she fell—struck her head against the base of one of the big pillars—and when they took her up—poor thing!—she was——"

"Not dead!" cried Lady Anna and her daughter together with horror-struck faces.

"No; not dead *then*, but she has died since—she never regained her consciousness. They took her to the nearest hospital. I went to see after her—everything possible was done, but to no effect."

"Horrible!" said Horace.

"Who was she? Did you know?" said Lady Anna in a low tone to the young man.

"Yes; I knew. I had seen her before. I was sorry for her, so I went and looked after her. She was not a bad sort," he said in an undertone to Lady Anna.

"You shall tell me about her later. Anyway, you acted a Christian's part," she answered. "But, Marcia, my child, what is it? You look scared"—in fact she was pale and trembling.

"It is strange; so terribly strange. I cannot bear to think of it," said Marcia, as if to herself.

"What is strange?" cried Alice Wentworth. "Do you mean this shocking story?"

"Yes. I mean that and something more. I mean that Lilian dreamt this, saw this very scene in a dream, weeks ago."

"Not possible!" said a chorus of voices.

"Quite possible, only too possible, for it is a fact which frightens me to think of. Do you remember, mother, that morning she woke in a fright and roused all the house with her screams? She told me afterwards that she had a dreadful dream; and then she described to me the scene at the church that Mr. Hervey witnessed. She would not let me speak of it, nor tell mother. She thought she should be laughed at, but the impression made upon her was such that her former love for him

became almost aversion and she dreaded seeing him again, because when with him she felt powerless against his influence ; and, indeed, who, looking upon his handsome face, could believe him bad ?—besides, she had loved him, you know ; and it is hard to forget the love of one's youth"—here Horace took her hand—"but he was a bad man—I know it, I feel it," she added, with increasing vehemence. "Oh, mother ! to think our Lilian should only have been saved by that horrid dream !"

There was deep silence when Marcia ceased ; every one present was too much impressed to speak.

Lady Anna was troubled and thoughtful. She was in doubt whether she should tell Lilian of this or not.

After some consideration she said, "I think Lilian had better know nothing of this strange coincidence at present. She is not strong enough ; it might——"

"Agitate her, of course," interrupted Marcia. "Her dream was so exactly like what really happened—there was only one difference: she saw the woman when about to *enter* the church, not after the ceremony, as Mr. Hervey says was actually the case."

"She was warned on the threshold of her fate," said Wentworth. "But come, Marcia and Alice, let us go out—we are getting gloomy."

Left alone with young Hervey, Lady Anna said :

"So you knew this hapless creature ?"

"I had seen her once—I knew about her. If she was not his wife, she, at least, believed herself to be so. He is a villain !"

Lady Anna shuddered. "What an escape my child has had."

"She has, indeed ! but his poor little wife. I am troubled for her—and I was the idiot who introduced him to her—such a nice girl, too," said Hervey.

"She will probably believe every lie he tells her, and trust him entirely, until it suits him to undeceive her," rejoined Lady Anna.

Hervey remained silent and thoughtful for a few minutes, then said :

"The question is which of the two was the real Lady Drummond on the day of the wedding."

"Surely there can be no question. Bad as he is, I cannot believe him capable of treachery so base as that. Of course he deceived the other poor creature," exclaimed Lady Anna unconsciously; for although she was really a good woman, it seemed to her less wicked to betray the one than to deceive the other, whose class should be a protection.

"Lady Anna, Herbert Drummond is, believe me, capable of everything," answered Hervey in a tone of conviction.

"Alas! I fear so; and to think that he should have been my Lilian's first love!"

A Debt of Honour.

CHAPTER I.

AFTER Colonel Tremaine had fairly settled himself down into a first-class carriage at Marseilles, *en route* for Cannes, he disturbed himself again to say to the man at the window :

"Oh, by-the-bye, Alinson, how about hotels? I don't know these foreign places a bit. I thought of the 'Grand.'"

"Well, you might do worse. The liquor's bad, of course ; but the food's tolerable and so is the view. I was there for a couple of nights. But, I say, old fellow," leaning into the window so that his remark was strictly confidential, "there are some rum chaps there—a sort of Monte Carlo gang—and there is one old fellow with a daughter——"

"Well?"

"Anything but *well*, I assure you."

"All right ; thanks. 'In vain is the net spread,' you know."

"Not at all ; don't be foolhardy, old chap. Most people just wait for the net to be spread to tumble into it headlong."

"What's she like?"

"Like! Oh, I don't know ; but he's as deep as a well, and no truth at the bottom—when you get there."

"Is she pretty—smart—attractive?"

"She's *nothing*—there, you're off. Be cautious ; don't say I didn't warn you."

He ran along by the side of the train as it steamed slowly out of the station, until he began to feel the pace quicken, then he fell back, and walked slowly away.

Left to himself, Colonel Tremaine wrapped his greatcoat firmly round him, put on a comfortable cap, and settled back into his corner, finally taking an aggressive glance round at the other occupants, who had been so ill advised as to invade his solitude.

Opposite to him was a tall foreigner with an unshaven chin and short red hair ; next to him a lady and her maid, most distinctively English ; and on his own side, only an insignificant

chit of a girl in a sailor hat and a striped skirt, to whom he did not give a second glance.

He took out yesterday's *Times*, and held it steadily before him, for fear it should occur to any of these people to address him. But, all the same, it was not long before the lady opposite leant forward to speak.

"Would you mind putting the window up? the sun is going down."

"Certainly," leaning forward to do her bidding. "Do you find it cold?"

"No, but one never sits with the window open on the Riviera it is not the custom."

As Colonel Tremaine pulled up the window, the girl beside him gave an odd sort of sigh, that attracted his attention. It caused him to glance down at her, and a vague wonder as to how she came to be travelling alone, passed through his mind. She was reading a French novel, with an undesirable title, very eagerly, and was turning the pages rapidly. He could not determine at first glance whether she was French or English. At the Cannes station, the doorway was blocked by the important English lady, who was handing innumerable parcels and boxes to her maid. But when she was safely deposited on the platform, in charge of her footman, Colonel Tremaine suddenly remembered the girl behind him, and turned his head.

"Can I hand you your things?" he said courteously. "There seem to be no porters."

"I have nothing," she said.

She lifted a pair of very blue eyes, and seemed to look through him. There was absolutely no expression on her face. Her silk glove was still between the pages of her book, marking the place. Before he had time to speak again, she had jumped from the carriage, and passed him.

Still walking firmly and impetuously, she signed to a *fiacre* to come up to the barrier, and stepped in, leaving the book open on her knee.

"To the Grand Hotel," she said. "No, there is no luggage."

CHAPTER II.

COLONEL TREMAINE was delayed by his luggage, and was a little late at the *table d'hôte*. He slipped into the empty seat

reserved for him by the waiter, and prayed that the people beside him would not think it necessary to make conversation. There was a good deal of animated talk going on round him, and a loud-voiced man at the head of the table was airing his opinions in a strong brogue. Some of the people were staring at him contemptuously, some were contradicting him fiercely, some were taking absolutely no notice; but Colonel Tremaine's attention was attracted, for the moment, by a slight figure sitting composedly beside the loud-voiced man, almost as if she were unconscious of his vulgar noisiness.

He looked at her with a puzzled air, and apparently his fixed gaze had a mesmeric effect, as she lifted again those very blue eyes and turned them straight upon him. He did not know if she were young or old, he did not even consciously identify her with the girl in the train, but he found himself saying with a kind of grim amusement: "Alinson's 'old fellow,' and the 'daughter;'" then again, "What a cad the man is—but, at any rate, Alinson must have nipped our acquaintance in the bud—and she is not a pretty child either." His natural instinct was to shun her eyes when they inadvertently rested on him; but he was curious too—he wondered if she had recognized his friend's description of herself, as no names were named, if she was humble, or ashamed, or a cad like the man. But his neighbours on the other side had started a conversation, and he had to listen to the details of two complicated diseases, before the dessert released him.

He went out on to the terrace, and stood leaning against the balustrade smoking, but presently a quick footstep broke the silence, and he saw a figure in white come softly out of one of the long windows and steal into the shadows. In a minute a man's figure came into the doorway too, and hesitated, then followed more slowly.

"Ah, mademoiselle," said a low voice. "I have found you, *coquine*. Your father is in the billiard-room, and here you can be undisturbed. Ah, little wicked one, how slyly you escaped."

Colonel Tremaine shrugged his shoulders, and sauntered slowly off in the direction of the garden. He heard a few rapid words of English, then French, and looking up at the terrace from below, he saw the two figures clearly defined against the white balustrade in the moonlight.

"Thank you, Alinson," he said aloud ; "you were quite right, except that the net is spread rather too plainly, after all—poor little devil."

CHAPTER III.

IT seemed as if the girl with the sailor hat was an absolute stranger to all the ladies in the hotel. She walked alone, she sat reading in the garden alone, and if by any chance any one followed her on to the terrace after dinner, it was always a man, and generally the coarse, oily Frenchman who had accosted her the first evening. She seemed so absolutely alone that it would have been almost painful, except for her seeming carelessness of her position. Her father had scraped up an acquaintance with the colonel, and in a day or two he was not surprised when the man offered him an introduction to his daughter, and led him out on to the terrace. The girl was sitting there, on an iron chair, with her elbows on the balustrade and her eyes turned far away over the sea. She must have heard their footsteps, but she did not turn her head, even when her father touched her on the arm.

"Anne, my darling," he said, "this is a gentleman who wants to know you. Colonel Tremaine—my daughter—my only one, and a jewel at that."

He laughed an easy laugh, and pressed Anne's arm. She gave a hurried look at him, and then turned her face away, whilst a slow colour flamed up into her cheeks.

"I think I have met your daughter before," said Colonel Tremaine.

He was sitting easily on the balustrade, and he had not thrown his cigar away, but when the girl raised her eyes, he gave a friendly laugh. He felt a little curious about her, and not unfriendly—her position seemed anomalous, and—he was not quite as sure as he had been that she was not pretty.

As the other man sauntered away, he came a few paces nearer to her, and sat on the other iron chair. In the small hand that lay before him on the balustrade, was a little bunch of heliotrope. He leant forward and took it from her hand, and held it to his face. In a minute she had started up, and turned passionately on him.

"How dare you, how dare you touch me!" she said, in a low

choked voice. Her eyes looked more blue than ever, and the little curls of her hair were blowing on her forehead.

He put the heliotrope slowly into his button hole, holding his cigar still between his lips, and he laughed.

"Isn't that what we were left here alone for?" he asked insolently.

"Oh, I hate you—I hate you all," she said, still in that low, intense tone. "I wish I could jump over this terrace, and into the sea, and end it—one can't gamble when one is dead."

"Is it gambling?"

He had thrown his cigar away, and come nearer. He had begun to feel interested—her attitude was charming as she sat with her small head gracefully erect, and the brilliant light in her eyes. The figure below the terrace had turned, and was strolling back again. With its approach something indefinable came into the girl's face, and made it seem old.

"I saw you that day at Marseilles."

There was no answer.

"You were alone?"

Still silence.

"Well, I can't waste my time," he said brusquely. "I am not one of your set, you see; and I don't know what interests you. What does interest you?"

"Nothing," passionately.

"Only French novels, presumably?"

"Don't speak to me," she said under her breath. "Why are you different to me to what you are to other ladies—why is every one different? Oh, yes," with a sudden change of expression, "talk to me a little—look as if you were very interested. Don't go."

He looked up keenly to see what had caused her sudden, hurried whisper, and saw a man coming across the terrace. It was not her father, but the Frenchman who had followed her after dinner, on the first evening of his arrival. He stood scowling at Tremaine, as he rose leisurely, and tossed the bit of heliotrope from his button hole deliberately into the garden.

Anne had risen too, and stood drawing deep breaths, that might have been fear or passion. There was nothing soft or womanly about her—nothing gracious, and as he met her angry eyes, Colonel Tremaine gave a short laugh.

"You do me too much honour, mademoiselle," he said; "two is company, and I see I have already supplanted this gentleman too long."

She bent her head, still looking at him, and as he walked away her eyes seemed to follow him mechanically. After he had disappeared into the hotel she turned to her companion.

"What am I to understand?" he said. "You are interested in this ape of an Englishman?"

"No, I hate him," she said softly. "He is just the same as every other man. But I think—I don't *know*, because I am not in very good society—but I think he is a gentleman."

CHAPTER IV.

A WHOLE week went by, and Colonel Tremaine saw very little of Anne. Every now and then a remembrance of that sudden change from anger to a kind of fear flashed over him, and puzzled him. What had a girl of that kind to be afraid of? Why should she mind the familiar attentions of one man more or less? who was she that she should pick and choose? Sometimes, in the sunny garden, he found his eyes mechanically following the girlish figure on its solitary rambles—the small, young face that peered in at the wired-in tennis courts, like the Peri at the gate of Paradise, and once, when he was playing Halma after dinner with Lady Morgan, the vague feeling over-mastered his prudence. The windows had been closed, but not bolted, and, all of a sudden, the centre one was pushed wide open, and Anne stood in the aperture, with flushed cheeks and distended eyes. She gave a quick look round at the cold inquiry that was turned upon her, and made a movement inwards, but, before she had taken two steps, Lady Morgan had stopped playing and drawn a warm shawl round her shoulders.

"Will some one tell that—young person—to go in or out," she said icily. "Really, one has to bear a good deal from those sort of people. Colonel Tremaine, it is your play."

A young American woman, who was leaning over the table watching the game, raised a pair of bright eyes. "Oh, don't you see that brute is following her?" she said; "he is outside. Haven't you noticed how she loathes him?"

"My dear," said Lady Morgan in a shocked voice, "pray don't be so hasty. Don't you know what a set she is in? One can have nothing to do with her."

"She is so pretty," said the American woman doggedly.

"My dear—no style—absolutely none; and, as to the other matter, she is engaged to be married to the creature. That stamps her."

"Engaged to be married," said Colonel Tremaine, as he vaguely hopped a man half down the board; "and to that brute? Why, there must be twenty years between them."

"I daresay," said Lady Morgan coldly. "I take no interest in persons of her class. I believe it is an arrangement of the father's—a debt of honour."

"You mean she is the payment of the debt—she represents the coin of the realm."

"So they say."

Colonel Tremaine had raised his hand and jerked the board. He met the eyes of the American woman full upon him. For a moment he returned her gaze without wavering, then he looked down, and began hurriedly to rearrange the men.

"You are sorry," said the young woman in an undertone, as she moved a few of his men into their places.

"Sorry? I hardly know—poor little devil," he said without looking up.

But he did not move or look again at the closed window. For half an hour he was, perhaps, conscious of even footfalls on the terrace outside, and then people began to separate, and saunter away, and the Halma board was closed; but by the time he had put on his overcoat, and lit a cigar, the terrace was quite deserted, except for the loud-voiced man he had always so successfully avoided, and the shrewd, objectionable Frenchman, who was gesticulating rather fiercely on the hotel steps.

CHAPTER V.

IT was on these same steps that he was standing next morning, looking out ostensibly at the still blue sea, to be seen through a barrier of palms, but with eyes unconsciously arrested by a girl's young figure standing on the terrace below him, in an attitude of rigid attention. It was noticeable in her lifted head, in the

clenched hand upon the balustrade, in the involuntary half-turn she made at every advancing step.

Colonel Tremaine looked above and beyond her with dogged determination, but he was distinctly conscious of the soft hair that the wind blew lightly to and fro, and of the pretty piquancy of her strained attitude. It was with a start that a voice in the hall behind him recalled him to other things.

"Well, Don Quixote, how is the distressed damsel?"

He stroked his moustache, and looked at the bright face questioningly.

"Let us start fair, Mrs. Seymour," he said. "You took me by surprise, and I have not got an answer ready."

She nodded her head in the direction of the garden.

"Take the valuable advice of a world-worn woman," she said; "and avoid *that*."

"Thanks, there is no danger," he said coldly.

"We shall see."

Some one brushed past her from inside the hotel with a curt "Pardon," and a discourteous movement; and, in a minute, the French count had sprung down the steps, and planted himself by the girl's side. She did not turn towards him, but she was obviously conscious in every nerve of his detested presence. Mrs. Seymour looked steadily at the colonel, and then with a meaning gesture at the little group upon the terrace. They saw Anne suddenly lift her head like some pretty creature brought to bay, and as the count pressed nearer to her she receded more and more, until she was as close to the balustrade as it was possible to go. He stretched out his hand, still talking in voluble undertones, with the obvious intention of taking the few poor flowers tucked into her belt, but Anne pushed his hand away, and leant down again, as far as she could lean with safety, out of reach of his odious familiarity.

Colonel Tremaine looked furtively at Mrs. Seymour from under very straight brows.

"One can't let a woman be bullied before one's eyes," he said a little defiantly.

"No? Why, the bell has just rung for breakfast. What do you propose to do?"

Again there was a slight defiance in his tone.

"You think me a fool."

"Indeed, no," she said in a low, moved tone. "I think you are a *preux chevalier*. If it ends in King Cophetua, instead of Don Quixote, I am at your service."

She slipped away with a light laugh, leaving him standing on the topmost step, with his face resolutely turned away from the group below him.

"I shall stand here to see she has a fair chance," he said to himself. Then he threw his cigar on to the terrace and came a step lower.

In a minute Anne, as if suddenly aware of his presence, turned her face from the sea, and sent a quick, soft pleading glance straight into his eyes. Her cheeks were crimson, and her eyes wet, and before he could reason with himself, Colonel Tremaine was down the steps, and was standing before her, hat in hand, ignoring the count's scowling face in the background.

"I have come," he said quietly. Her eyes, like blue forget-me-nots, were still looking straight at him, but she stood in ashamed silence, finding it quite impossible to answer. The Frenchman had pushed roughly past her, and spoke in an angry, overbearing voice:

"Monsieur, I do not know the custom of your nation, but with us it is not habitual to interrupt the *tête-à-tête* of *fiancés*."

"It is not the custom of our nation to take the initiative," said Colonel Tremaine coolly. "We leave it to the lady. Mademoiselle shall make the choice between us."

Still Anne had no voice to answer, but she stretched out a cold hand and touched his sleeve.

"All right," he said under his breath.

"Oh, if you wish to quarrel," said the count sulkily, "my number is 38. Pardon, monsieur, if I decline to speak further before this lady."

"For you, Anne," turning angrily upon her, "I shall speak to your father. I leave for Monte Carlo at once; there I shall meet him, and I will tell him of your boldness."

Again there came into her eyes that quick look of surprise and alarm, but she gave a dreary little smile.

"You can tell what you will, M. le Comte," she said; "it does not seem to me I have committed a great crime."

He strode fiercely away without answering, and Anne, looking after him, gave a long sigh.

"Oh, I hate him," she said under her breath.

"Surely." They had begun to move side by side across the terrace, but he stopped, and looked at her curiously.

"Surely you are not going to marry a man for whom you have so little regard?"

"It has been arranged for me."

"And who, in pity's name, arranged it?"

"My father."

"Your father? Well, it is possible the man may not be as bad as he looks; but if the arrangement is unpleasant to you, you have a choice?"

"No, I have no choice," she said earnestly; "it is something about money—it is always something about money," with a sad little smile.

Colonel Tremaine held the door open for her, and passed in mechanically, quite unconscious of the slight sensation they made on entering. Beside her empty chair, there was another leaning against the table. He hesitated a moment, and then he turned it round, and seated himself in it.

"Have you no mother?" he said in a very low voice.

"No, she died years ago—we did not live on the Riviera then."

"You had a home in England?"

"Yes. I think my father was in the English army. You must not pity me," she went on earnestly, "for marrying this man I hate so much—you see it will be better then."

"Better! to marry a brute like that?"

"Yes," with an eager ring in her voice. "You see I need not speak to him then—or see him much, and I could have a home of my own, and read."

"My poor child," he said with infinite compassion, "is that your idea of married happiness?"

"Oh, I don't think married people are very happy," she said. "Of course I should like best to be married without *him*. I want to know nice ladies and little children—I am fond of children, but the mothers do not wish me to play with them—and then—it has occurred to me that men treat married ladies with more respect."

Lady Morgan, across the table, had fixed her eye-glasses immovably, and the coldness of her glance was paralyzing, but Anne's soft little voice rippled on unconsciously.

"Before my mother died, when we did not live on the Riviera, we had other friends, but I have never had one since."

"Till now," he said with his kind smile.

Breakfast was over, and every one was rising from their seats. Anne had risen too, but she paused to look back at him, with her direct gaze. "Do you mean that? Do you think it is possible—you will not be sorry by-and-by?"

"I think it is quite possible," he said, still with that quiet smile. "I am going to ask you a favour. If a woman, a nice woman, asks you to come and pay her a visit to-day—this afternoon—will you come?"

He was aware that he was unnecessarily eager about her answer.

"Of course, why, of course I will," she said. "But no one would ask me—no nice woman will ever know me."

"I will let you know in an hour's time," he went on, disregarding the interruption. "What is the number of your room? 17? I will send a little note and you must answer it to number 38."

"You are very kind," she said gently; "but you must not mind if the lady does not want me—I am so accustomed to being disappointed."

* * * * *

And that was how it came about, that at four o'clock Anne was standing outside the arbour in the garden, with her hands in Mrs. Seymour's kind clasp, and the friendly tea spread before them. Perhaps, taking it all in all, it was the happiest day that she had ever known. To sit beside this bright, gentle American woman, and feel the soft hands of little children on her face and hair, and to be conscious of the air of courtesy and refinement round her that were her birthright, was almost more than she could bear, but it was six o'clock before a voice in the open doorway disturbed her.

"My child, I have been seeking you everywhere. Madam, I shall never forget your kindness to my motherless daughter, but it is almost dinner time, and I have a few words to say to her."

Anne struggled blindly to her feet, wrenching herself free from the clinging hands of the children, who had climbed upon her knee. A great horror of her father was upon her as she struggled

meekly after him, up the steep path, feeling that the hour of recompense had come.

As she passed into the gloom, possessed by a sick fear, some one hurried past her, turned, came back, and fell into her steps.

"Well, was it a success?" said Colonel Tremaine.

"Oh, it was perfect," said Anne. "I have no words to thank you. *Mais, on paie pour tout,*" she added softly in French, with a quick upward look, as she hurried past him and was swallowed up in the gloom of the garden.

CHAPTER VI.

"It is quite time I left this place," said Colonel Tremaine to himself. "Fortunately my month is up to-day, and Alinson has taken a room for me at Nice—it has all arranged itself most providentially, for, by Jove! the child was beginning to interest me."

He sauntered down the wide staircase and came face to face with the clerk, who was hurrying up.

"Some *messieurs anglais* have just arrived," he said hurriedly, "and we have no room for their accommodation; but it occurred to me that this was the day monsieur had arranged to leave."

"I have changed my mind," said Colonel Tremaine slowly. "I shall not give up my rooms."

"Pardon, monsieur. I will, then, tell these messieurs that we have no accommodation."

He ran down the stairs again, leaving Colonel Tremaine to make paltry excuses to himself, and to face the situation.

"After all, it will be interesting to watch the game played out, and I *am* interested—I am accountable to no one."

Mrs. Seymour ran lightly down the stairs and passed him.

"You are going to-day, are you not, Colonel Tremaine? I am miserable about it."

"Pray don't begin to be miserable yet," he said drily. "I have changed my mind."

"Good heavens! why?"

"There is nothing so extraordinary in it," he said irritably. "The news from England is not very tempting, and I have still some months' leave."

"And your people?"

"I have no people—at least, none who care two straws about it—whilst here"—he was looking straight into her eyes with his inscrutable smile—"even you yourself own that I shall be missed."

She gave a little gesture of assent towards Anne's open window.

"Yes, you will be missed here," she said thoughtfully. "Well, you can come to tea in the arbour this afternoon—with Anne. It is no use your saying you have another engagement, for I should take the liberty of doubting you."

"I don't want to refuse. I will come with pleasure," he said.

* * * *

It was a week of absolute sunshine and unquestioned security. The anemones began to droop, and die a little, and to scatter scarlet petals on the gravelled walks; the scent of the violets was a delicious dream of spring, and Colonel Tremaine found that he was always being left alone with Anne; that his entry to the reading-room where she sat reading busily by the window, was a signal for the others to scatter and fall away, as if there was something monstrous in his liking or his pity; that even her father, with elaborate playfulness, would disappear at his approach, and that Mrs. Seymour had always important business with her husband or her children, after the homely tea in the arbour; and there would be Anne sitting in her pale blue frock, with her sweet, contented, childish face, in which the pink blush went and came at his every word, and with those very blue eyes for ever fixed upon his face.

Surely no net was ever spread so unblushingly in sight of the victim; but Colonel Tremaine hardly noticed it. He liked to come into the breakfast-room and see the small head lifted to catch his quick glance; to see her hand go out eagerly to settle the chair that he had appropriated beside her; he liked to feel the sort of thrill her unexpected presence gave him; to interpret and defeat the unwelcome attentions of her future lord. He knew that it would all be over soon, and that he would regret it. If it was possible she might be happy, it would be a comedy after all; but, just now, it had so much the appearance of a tragedy in embryo.

The French count had never accustomed himself to the new situation, and wore a menacing and scowling expression, that boded no good for Anne's future; but he was forced to wait patiently for his moment of revenge. It seemed so impossible to find any charge that could be brought home—nothing but light words and childish smiles, and a quick leaping of blue eyes to the magnet that attracted them. Nothing more! nothing but sunshine and happiness, and the scent of flowers, and a misdirected arrow that had reached her heart.

So they stood together—he and she—I mean my hero and my heroine—at the door of the harbour, waiting for Mrs. Seymour and the children, talking idly of the passing events of the day; but conscious all the time of the precious fleeting minutes that were hurrying on. Even Anne could not accuse him of disrespect now—could have seen nothing to disapprove of in the kind eyes that loved to linger on the small head that was on a level with his shoulder—on the slender white hands that were clasped together. But, at that moment, there was a quick footstep outside, and an angry voice cried out, with a fierce imprecation:

"Again, monsieur, I find you in an equivocal position. I should be justified altogether now in refusing the hand of mademoiselle."

Colonel Tremaine drew himself upright, and stared coldly at his infuriated rival.

"Be careful how you insult this lady in my presence," he said.

"Insult? it is you who offer her insults, not I. I intend to marry her. I offer her the love of an honest gentleman, of an ancient and irreproachable lineage—whilst you?"

"Take care," said Colonel Tremaine warningly, for Anne had shrunk back into the shelter of the harbour, and was looking at him with dilated eyes.

"You offer her—yes, I repeat it, monsieur—the trifling attentions of a moment, the compromising monopoly of a *roué*. You, an English officer of a high position, are you prepared to marry this daughter of a trickster, a gambler?"

"I," thundered Colonel Tremaine, making a step forward, but never for a moment oblivious of the agonized entreaty in Anne's eyes, "I also offer her the love of an honest man.

If there are other advantages to be gained by the alliance with a *roué*, a man of no character like myself, they are included in it."

There was a moment of dead silence, and then Colonel Tremaine turned, gently and tenderly, to Anne. "As once before, the choice is with mademoiselle," he said. "Speak, dear."

But Anne could not speak, she could only shake her head. "Oh, no, no," she gasped presently. "I must not do it. It is all as he said. I will love you all my life for your—your generosity, but I will not do it."

For all answer he put out his hand, and drew her closer and closer, until she felt the protection of his arm.

"That is enough," he said.

"But, monsieur," blustered the Frenchman, "it is an affair of honour."

"So I should think," said Colonel Tremaine. "I heard it was debt. You will kindly inform those whom it concerns, monsieur, that the debt is transferred to me."

* * * * *

There was a nine days' wonder at the Grand Hotel, of course, and much conversation. There were always two distinct parties, of which Mrs. Seymour was the leader on one side, and Lady Morgan on the opposition. Colonel Tremaine and the count left at the same moment and, in fact, in the same train, the one for Nice and the other for Monte Carlo. Anne remained for the three weeks previous to her wedding, as the guest of Mrs. Seymour, who was perfectly happy in lavishing every love and care on the neglected child. What arrangement Colonel Tremaine entered into with his father-in-law never transpired, but, after giving the bride away with copious tears, and making an objectionable speech at the wedding breakfast, he, too, joyfully took the train for Monte Carlo, and troubled them no more. Mrs. Tremaine's gentle manners, and intense devotion to her husband, were a passport into the best English society, which, in time, condoned the imprudent marriage, and even invented a genealogical tree, by which they credited her with good family on her mother's side; but Lady Morgan could never be persuaded to lay down her arms, or to fall into the popular error.

"My dear," she would say to an impassioned pleader, "we must close up our ranks in these days, and be as intolerant as we dare. Mrs. Tremaine is of no family. I was in Cannes through the whole of that fatal affair, and she was no one—positively no one—from nowhere."

G. R. GLASGOW.

A Queen's Prison.

By ETHEL F. HEDDLE.

"SHIPWRECKED ON A KINGDOM."

THE glory of the September day is yet at its height, and Loch Leven dimples placidly under the hot sun, Ben Arty's long slope in a kind of hazy sunshine rising above the distant shore.

Everything seems half asleep, as if revelling in the mere glory of living—the sea gulls which wheel sleepily above the dazzling water, the little wild ducks, black on the blue ripples near the shore, the sheep browsing lazily on the grass, the placid cows, even the children on the little pier where we are standing to choose our boat. And yonder is the Castle Island, where the famous gray keep stands solitary amongst its trees; the old walls are full in the dazzling light, and yet they are strangely solitary and sad, sun-flecked though they are. It would seem as if driving rain and mist wreaths creeping down from the Lothian to cover them softly as in a pall would better suit them than this glorious and marvellous September day.

We have driven down the hot roads and by many fields where the reapers are reaping still, and the corn, in golden piles, stands all around; it is a goodly harvest day of peace and plenty and light laugh and jest, and yet as we look out yonder across the gleaming water to these gray walls, we forget the sunshine and the golden grain, and the musical whirr of the reaper's machine, for there is Loch Leven Castle, and there Scotland's saddest, most hapless Queen, be she saint or sinner, spent the first year of her long prison days. We enter a boat, "The Lady Alice"—we get it easily, for yesterday the fishing season ended—and soon we are on our way, have passed "Roy's Folly" and the odd pile of the "New House" on the shore, and have landed on the little wooden pier of the island.

The castle is not empty; a pic-nic party are hastily putting some fruit into their basket, and a lazy youth is being roused from the fascinations of *Ally Sloper's Half Holiday* to "Come and see the gardens." As we enter the keep by the cellar, we

can hear their voices outside amongst the trees, and so they melt from our view, and we are not sorry. And here we stand at last in the second floor of the keep, and the one above us, its flooring gone, was the Queen's! It was divided into two, if not three, rooms, her sitting-room, with its little oratory and huge fireplace, and her bedchamber; above that were her physician's rooms. In the little bedroom she signed her abdication, forced by threats and after long refusal; and in the adjoining room she was forced to hear the rejoicing on the coronation of her son, ordered by the bad taste of her jailor, to take place in the shape of rockets and cannonading on the very ramparts of the castle. Proud Mary seldom wept, and yet we are told that she flung herself down by the table then, and with her beautiful head bent, sobbed there long and bitterly. "Shipwrecked on a Kingdom," indeed; and yet though her crown had brought her little but sorrow, Mary's was no tame nature to part from her birth-right easily.

Perhaps it is not generally remembered that the Queen had visited the castle on more than one occasion before Lords Lindsay and Ruthven led her there as prisoner. With Darnley in the first happy days of her marriage she had come there more than once, and here she had even received the great Reformer, who had been deputed by the General Assembly "to expostulate with her upon the laxity with which the recently enacted penal laws were enforced against the Roman Catholics."

It was April then, and Mary received her sturdy subject before supper, giving him a two hours' conference, and pleading from him that toleration for herself and her fellow believers which she yielded to her Protestant subjects. The interview, unlike some which took place between the Queen and Knox, does not seem to have ended unamiably, though neither yielded an inch, and Mary even met him again next day after a hawking near Kinross, and begged his interposition as reconciler in a domestic dispute between two of his congregation, the Queen's own half-sister, the Countess of Argyle, and her husband. And here, with all due deference to Mary's tact, we scarcely fancy she chose her mediator aright, for this most delicate and difficult of all rôles surely hardly lay in the stern Reformer's line! The second interview ended with the gift of a watch from the Queen, and then the two parted, Mary to ride back with her gay party and take boat to the castle, Knox to Edinburgh, where he might

repeat the ill success of his interview and warning to the Fathers of the Church.

Mary's next visit to the castle was with Darnley on their triumphal tour through Fife, and here she dined before proceeding on her journey. It was her last visit before she was brought there a prisoner, after two eventful years, in June, 1567. Very different must have been her feelings then, as she entered the little boat with the two stern and scowling lords as gaolers (one of whom she had threatened vengeance on Carberry Hill only two days previous), from those with which she had seen the island last. Then, gay and radiant and queenly, with her young lover-husband still fondly loved, the castle was only a picturesque holiday abode, where she could lay aside the cares of State, and hawk, and boat, and ride, "*a bourgeois wife*," as she loved to call herself in gray St. Andrews. Now, fresh from the tortures of that dreadful ride through the howling and insulting Edinburgh mob, and from the defeat on Carberry Hill, the sun must indeed have "*looked wae upon her*" as the little party saw this sad dawn break over Ben Arty's slope. Weary after her long midnight ride, her mind a conflicting chaos of miserable thought, her bitterest enemy and detractor might well pity Mary now, as she stood by the boat's side and looked back upon the shore. What ghosts of the past—Darnley's dead face, Bothwell's as she bade him a long farewell on the battle field, the innocent smiles of her lost child—all these rose to sting and rend her, and in her ears the awful insults, the curses, the ribald jests of the very mob which had once hailed her their Queen, with proud and admiring adulation!

But the dawn grew rosy in the east, it dimpled and flashed over the water, the oars were dipped, and Mary found herself a prisoner in the castle, not as hitherto in her own royal apartments, but, till further arrangements, in the round tower east of the gateway.

Here she remained for two months with only two women—Jane Kenedy, the faithful, and Maria Courcelles—and then she was removed to the keep.

The story of Mary's attempted escape as a washerwoman which was foiled because the boatmen, seeing the delicacy and whiteness of her hands, recognized her, and refused to row her from the castle, — her abdication, — her friendship, first with

George and then with Willie Douglas, are all too well known to bear repetition ; and all readers of "The Abbot" are familiar with the romantic story of her escape. And yet how freshly it all comes back to us standing beside the very walls of her prison ! We can see her there—sobbing piteously, a discrowned Queen—kneeling at prayer in the little oratory, praying for patience and hope—gazing sadly in the dull December light at the frowning hillside — walking with her faithful Jane in the little garden, while the sunshine dazzled and dimpled just as it does to-day on the smiling lake—talking to Willie Douglas by the castle wall, with the bewildering smile, saddened now, but powerful still to make men die gladly and risk all for her sake—standing, queenly in her wrath and scorn of Moray's ingratitude—finally, a shrinking figure in her cloak, gliding down the staircase and through the gate to the open boat ! And now Willie Douglas has flung the gate key into the cannon's mouth, the other boats are locked, the oars dip softly into the water, the light of the wondrous May evening falls softly on Mary's white and eager face, the white veil with its red border is waved to the waiting partizans on the shore, the shore is reached, her horse is mounted ! Ah ! what a thrill of wild joy and exultation must have filled the captive's heart as the swift-footed mare carried her on and on, and ever on, the spring air soft in her face, the eager voices of her friends triumphant in her ear ! And Loch Leven and her prison growing ever further and further behind !

We do not know, but we can guess what visions of hope, mirage-like in their beauty, filled Queen Mary's heart as she rode—her throne and kingdom regained, her good name re-established, her beauty triumphant once more, peace and safety and honour within her grasp. We can fancy how her face would glow with hope, how her bounding steed could hardly carry her fast enough, how she would see all these things hers already, sorrow and sighing for ever fled away. A Queen once more, with her boy to nestle in her arms and avenge her of her enemies, once he was big and strong and knew her truly !

And instead of these things, were to come Langside and England's prison welcome, Elizabeth's sneer and more deadly politeness, hope deferred to make her heart sick for nineteen years, and, last of all, the gloom, the axe, the block of Fothering-

hay! Blame her as you will—her wild and headstrong impulse, her passionate loves and hates, her sins, her mistakes, her faultiness—remember her up-bringing and religion, remember her trials, remember her provocations, remember the stormy days when a woman's hand should have been of iron to have held the sceptre, remember the sycophant's smile, the courtier's falsehood, the hypocrite's advice, and deal with Mary's memory gently, mercifully! He who can judge her hardly, let him go to Loch Leven's smiling lake, with the gray keep standing solitary in its island shores; let him remember all her history; let him remember her punishment! Let her prayers and her tears and her patience plead for her, with the recollection of her own pathetic words, "*Ayez mémoire de l'ame et de l'honneur de celle qui a esté votre royne.*"

Poor Queen! she need not have feared forgetfulness! She can stir many a heart still, as her story stirs ours now, as we stand by the lake's blue water, and the golden September day dies softly above us and upon Ben Arty's slope.

Dead, long centuries dead, and yet living, one of the most imperishable figures in the book of history! And the mystery, the tragedy, the story of her erring life, can never strike a deeper chord than here, where her sad face gazed out upon the hillside and the prison-waters, and where her prayers and tears pleaded for her to the one great King who alone shall judge her at last.

Three June Times.

IT was a perfect June evening. The day had been brilliantly fine, and the sun, who had performed his long journey through a cloudless blue sky, was now sinking, and his last rays were bathing all the world in a soft golden haze. The garden at Harborough Vicarage was looking its best at this season of the year, when the old-fashioned roses and pinks were filling the air with their fragrance, and the trees had not yet had their fresh mantle of green sullied by the heat and dust of the summer.

Two figures came slowly walking side by side along a mossy path, which was shut in on one side by a dense row of hollies, and on the other by the long, straggling boughs of some ancient and neglected espaliers. One was a man of about thirty-eight or forty, tall and broad-shouldered, with a pleasant-looking rather than handsome face, which was clean-shaven save for a thick moustache, only partially concealing the firm lines of a small, well-shaped mouth. The girl beside him, who was endowed with a considerable share of beauty, in addition to that which the freshness of youth gives to almost every one, was smiling up at him.

"And to think that I have only one more week here," she said, "where I've spent all my life. I suppose I ought to be sorry to leave it for ever, but yet somehow I'm not."

Fred Leighton looked down at her lovingly. "Do you think you can really be happy with me?" he asked. "I was thinking only to-day how dreadful it would be if some day, when it was too late, you should suddenly wake up to the fact that you had made a mistake; that you had tied yourself for life to a plain, uninteresting, middle-aged doctor, and that you should wish to be free again. Are you sure that——"

"Fred, don't talk nonsense," she interrupted, rubbing her cheek against the sleeve of his rough coat. "Whatever makes you think that I should ever get tired of you? It's much more likely that you should repent having married me. What is there about me that you should care about for long? I've no money; I'm only

tolerably good-looking, and I've no accomplishments. While you—you are everything to me. No one else has ever been so kind to me. And now," she continued in tones of mock despair, "what should I do if I hadn't you? You see, papa isn't really strong enough to keep on doing the work here, and though Reggie has been wishing him to give up the living for the last year and go to live with him, yet I don't think either he or his wife would be best pleased to have me cast on their hands. Lottie said the last time I saw her how nice it would be for me to be a governess and always spend the holidays with them. I knew what she meant. So you see if you had not kindly stepped forward I should have been obliged to do that, or else I should have had to be taken on with the house as a fixture. I'm sure I ought to be very much obliged to you." And she made him an elaborate courtesy.

"My darling Lucy," he said, drawing her closer to him, "you must have imagined all that. No one who knew you could help wishing to have you always with them. But that wasn't what I meant. I was thinking that perhaps you might find out some time that you had really only cared for me as a friend. You have lived so very quietly here, and have seen so few people that——"

"You mean that you were my only chance? Thank you for the compliment," with an offended air. "Don't you know that I might have been married three times before if I had liked? Didn't you ever hear of Mr. Fortescue, the curate at Bromley, who wanted me to share a hundred a year with him? Or Philip Wheeler, that rich farmer, who came here every week for a year before he dared even speak to me?"

"Yes; but of course you would never have thought of them," said Dr. Leighton laughing.

"Then, what about Mr. Grey? He was such a nice young man. Quite a gentleman—and so rich, and nice-looking, too. He proposed there, on that garden seat. A caterpillar dropped down his neck in the middle of it, so he had to leave off and fish it out. Somehow that spoilt the effect, and made me laugh."

"Then you've never cared for any one else?" he asked in a slightly relieved tone.

"Never," she answered promptly. "I never cared for any one till I first saw you. Do you remember where it was? At that

bazaar of the Lavingtons'. I remember I attacked you vigorously for a raffle, and you put in at once. I think that's what won my heart."

"And did you really like the look of me then?"

"Very much. You were the fifty-seventh person who put in, but the first who did so without resistance. I think I fell in love with you on the spot. It was a case of, 'Since first I saw your face,'" she sang softly.

They had sat down on the garden seat now.

"What a difference it will make to my home," he said. "And if it was dull for me, what must it have been for Georgie, poor little chap. He's been counting the weeks and days that must go by before he gets his 'new mamma.'"

Lucy took his large hand between her own small soft ones. "You shan't be dull now," she said. "We shall all be so happy together."

They sat for some minutes in silence. Then he rose slowly. "I'm afraid I must be riding off now," he said. "I told some one that I should be in at half-past nine. You see, a doctor can never have very much time to himself, even in the healthiest seasons."

Five minutes later he was riding down the dusky road. At the corner he turned and gazed at the dim, white-clad figure waving farewell to him from the gateway. And to think that in one week those long lonely years would be ended. Was the fair June evening typical of their future life, he wondered? He hoped so.

* * * * *

A year had gone by and it was June again. It was getting late in the evening when Dr. Leighton drove slowly up the hill to his house. He had made a long and tiring round, but then it was the last for a month. He felt like a schoolboy let loose, as he thought of the carefully-planned tour on which they were to start the next day. How Lucy would enjoy it. She had been looking so pale and tired lately, though she had always denied that there was anything the matter with her.

The last year had been a very happy one for Dr. Leighton. His home was so bright now, was something to look forward to at the end of a long day's work. And Lucy was so kind to little Georgie, and had so completely won his heart that he had sobbed

bitterly that morning, on being sent to spend the month with some young cousins, and had entreated to be allowed to stop with his "own dear mamma." The only fear that Dr. Leighton had had was that Lucy might find her life dull. He entreated her to have all her friends to see her and to go out as much as possible. At first she had said that she was perfectly contented, and that she would never go out when he was at home unless he accompanied her; but after a while she had allowed herself to be persuaded, and her first ball had given her so much pleasure that for the last few weeks she had been only too ready to take part in anything that was going on. Latterly her husband had thought that she had rather overdone it. But to-morrow they would be leaving Melton, and the change would set her up again.

So there were no cares in Dr. Leighton's mind as he got out of his dog-cart and entered the house.

"Lucy," he called, as he shut the front door, "I've finished my work for a month. Where are you? I want some dinner fearfully."

He opened the drawing-room door and looked in; but there was no one there. He went on into the dining-room. It was past their usual dinner hour, but the servants had not begun to set the table yet. That was odd. Lucy always made such a point of having everything ready the moment he came back.

"Lucy, Lucy, where are you?" he shouted, standing at the foot of the stairs. But the house seemed still and deserted. He gave a little shiver as he remembered that it used always to be like this in the times gone by, and he wondered whether Lucy ever felt oppressed by it when she was left alone, as was often the case, the whole day long. The kitchens were at the back of the house and were shut off by a baize door. He pushed it open and went through. The back door was open and he could see the two servants talking eagerly to the groom. He called them and they came in looking rather red and excited.

"Will dinner be ready soon?" he asked. "It's a good deal over the half-hour."

"Is it, sir? I'm so sorry. I didn't know it was so late," said the cook hurriedly. "Missus is not in yet, and—and I was waiting to ask her about the pudding. I'll only be a few minutes now, sir."

The housemaid had bustled off to lay the cloth.

"If your mistress is out, of course I shall wait for her, but I hope everything is quite ready."

He walked back into the dining-room. The housemaid came up to him nervously.

"Here's a note for you, sir," she said, and then hastened out of the room and shut the door.

He took it carelessly. Most likely it was from one of his patients, but the man he had engaged to take his place for the month would be here soon and would have to see to it. Then he glanced at it. It was addressed in Lucy's writing. He opened it quickly. It contained only one line: "Forgive and forget.—LUCY." What did it mean? A sudden darkness came over his eyes and he felt as though a giant's hand was grasping his heart. Grasping it and pressing the life out of it. He groped blindly to a seat. It was some moments before the power of thinking came back to him. He was sitting close to the side-board. He leaned forward, and pouring some brandy into a glass, drank it down. Then he looked again at the note he was still holding in his hand. What did it mean? Where was she? He sat thinking and vaguely wondering for some minutes undisturbed. The servants had returned to tell all they knew to the groom. Then he slowly walked upstairs. A large travelling trunk and a portmanteau stood on the landing. How light-heartedly he had finished packing them that morning. In Lucy's bedroom everything was just as he had seen it last. Her dressing-bag stood on a chair half packed. Nothing was missing. What could it mean? On the dressing table lay a tiny russia leather bag, which she used to carry her purse and bills in when shopping. He took it up mechanically and opened it. Lucy's purse and handkerchief were in it as usual. She must have intended to take it with her. It slipped from his hand and fell on the floor, scattering its contents. As he stooped to pick them up, something white caught his eye. It was a note, addressed to his wife, and open. He hesitated a moment and then began to read it. Evidently she had meant to take it with her. He was no longer in doubt now. He put it in his pocket and went downstairs again. This second blow had been harder than the first, but he had not been so unprepared. He passed into the drawing-room without noticing that some one was there.

"My poor friend," said the visitor—it was Mr. Vaughan, the

vicar of the parish—"I have been looking out for you for over an hour. I felt that I must come in to see you, to break the sad news to you gently, to try to soften the blow."

"Thank you," answered Dr. Leighton, avoiding the clergyman's out-stretched hand; "I know." Then he turned away, and placing his arms on the mantelpiece he rested his head on his hands.

"Yes, but you don't know the particulars; you only know the mere facts of the case," went on the vicar eagerly. "And to think that it has been going on for so long, and that you should never have known or suspected anything! I blame myself now exceedingly for not having spoken to you about it. My sister was always telling me that it was my duty, but I never liked to say anything, as of course it might have all been without foundation."

He paused, but Dr. Leighton said nothing.

"My sister tells me Captain Spenser used to be here almost every day; and Miss Ashton told her that at the ball last week they were together almost all the evening, and that every one was talking about it."

Still the vicar got no answer.

"I was so dreadfully shocked when I heard about it. I could hardly believe Mr. Simpson when he told me that he had seen Captain Spenser going off by the eleven train with a lady, closely veiled, who, he was sure, was Mrs. Leighton. My sister made him describe her dress, and then she came here and asked the servants what Mrs. Leighton had worn when she went out, and she found that the descriptions agreed even down to the gloves. It's a heavy affliction, my dear Leighton, and will be hard to bear," went on Mr. Vaughan, approaching the fireplace. "Not that I should blame you. You, of course, did everything that could have been expected, although I don't approve of people so far apart in years marrying. But I must say that I think that Mrs. Leighton——"

The doctor raised himself slowly and turned a pale haggard face to him.

"Can't you leave me alone?" he said.

"Oh, I'm sure I only wished to be of use to you," answered the vicar, moving slowly to the door. "I thought that perhaps you'd rather know the truth at once without having to ask any one. But of course if you wish me to go——"

"Yes, I do. I'm sure you meant to be kind, but I don't want any one with me just now."

The front door closed behind Mr. Vaughan, and he hurried home to give the latest news to his sister.

Dr. Leighton sat down on a chair—one that he had bought specially for Lucy—and tried to think. No one came near him. The servants discreetly kept to their own part of the house, where they talked and speculated till sleep overpowered them. He felt very glad that Georgie was away. But he would have to be kept away for some time now. There was no need for him to be undeceived yet. Then he remembered that his substitute would be here before long. That was fortunate. He would leave Melton immediately, and make up his mind where he was going after he had started. The carefully-packed trunks would not be needed now. He went into his dressing-room and put a few things into a bag. Then he locked the door of Lucy's room and let himself out of the house. Where should he go to, he wondered? As he walked to the station the remembrance of Lucy's position came to him suddenly. How selfish he had been only to have thought of his own sorrow and ruined happiness! He must think of Lucy. Whatever was best for her must be done.

The next morning Mr. Reginald Burton and his wife were at breakfast when a cab drove up.

"Whatever can the man want?" he said when the servant told him that Dr. Leighton said he must see him immediately.

"Hullo, Leighton, whatever are you doing here?" he said as he took his brother-in-law's hand. "Good heavens, man! what is the matter? Nothing wrong with Lucy?"

A few words served to explain. Reggie Burton was sympathetic—in a way.

"My dear fellow, I'm awfully sorry for you," he said. "I should never have thought that she'd have turned out like that. She was always rather—she never got on very well with us; but I should never have imagined her capable of this. It's most abominable."

"Hush! Don't blame her," answered Dr. Leighton sadly. "It wasn't her fault. I wanted you to tell me what it would be best to do now."

"Well, I suppose you'll get a divorce," suggested Reggie.

"I suppose I must," said his brother-in-law flushing. "Of course I must. And then they must be married. You'll have to see about that. I only want to know that she's all right and happy. Will you see to it? I'll pay everything."

"Oh, I'll do anything you tell me," answered Reggie good-naturedly. "But I shall tell her what I think of her and that I'll never see her again. But you've been up all night. You must want some breakfast. Will you stop here a few days? It's a confounded nuisance, but we've got a lot of people coming here to-day to stay. Friends of Lottie's. But you needn't see much of them."

"No, I think I'd rather not. I'll go back to town and be doing what I can. I don't want to lose any time. Perhaps you'll come up to me there in a day or two and arrange everything. Good-bye."

Reggie went back to his breakfast and told everything to his wife.

"And if ever you run away from me, my dear," he ended up, "I shan't trouble about your comfort so much. You'll have to take the consequences." And then they both laughed.

The divorce proceedings did not take long. There was no defence. Lucy was sitting on a terrace at Monaco, gazing out over the deep blue waters of the Mediterranean and trying to imagine that she was perfectly happy, when she learned that she was free. A letter was brought to her. It was from her husband—no, he was not her husband now. It was a carefully-written, business-like little note, without beginning, and simply signed with his initials, merely telling her that she was free to marry, and giving her some information about the little money which she had come into on her father's death, six months before. Then, as he had finished, a sudden yearning had come over him and he had added, "God bless you," in very shaky characters. Tears came to Lucy's eyes as she read it, and she pressed it for a moment to her lips. Just then Captain Spenser joined her. He had received a very strong letter, nominally from Reggie, and he hadn't liked it.

"What's the matter?" he asked. "No bad news?" glancing at the letter she held.

"Oh, no," she answered. "Only I'm rather tired. I think I'll go and lie down for a little while."

"Yes, do," he said. "There's that ball to-night and I want you to look well. And"—reddening slightly—"we shall have to be married to-morrow."

The next year passed slowly for Dr. Leighton. He had returned to Melton at the end of the month and resumed his old lonely life. More lonely than it had ever been, for he was quite alone now. People were kind, but their kindness irritated him. And some were sympathetic, which was worse. Miss Vaughan used to do her best, as she told her friends, to cheer him up, and graduated her sympathy, from a call in a grey dress with her brother immediately after Dr. Leighton's return, through several "quiet" dinners and suppers, till it culminated in an invitation to spend a week at Christmas with them, and her greatest friends used to whisper among themselves that they were sure that if Dr. Leighton chose to give her the slightest encouragement "dear Sophy" would propose to him on the spot. But Dr. Leighton had no thoughts of doing so. He almost invariably declined all invitations, whether from the Vaughans or from any one else, and devoted himself entirely to his work. It was the only thing that could keep him from thinking. Sometimes he felt himself wishing that Lucy had died while his belief in her was still unshaken, for then he could have dwelt on the remembrance of their happiness. But now her memory could bring him nothing but pain. And so a year passed till June came round again.

He was sitting one night on the verandah at the back of the house, looking out on the little garden which seemed almost like a glimpse of the country under the beautifying influence of the clear moonlight. All the clocks in the town had sounded the midnight in their many different tones some while ago, but no inclination to sleep had come over Dr. Leighton yet, though his day's work had been very long and tiring. He sat, trying to think of his work; of the short holiday he was going to give himself with Georgie next week; of—of anything rather than those memories which were always forcing themselves into his mind, try to keep them back as he might. A faint tinkle from upstairs roused him. It was the night bell. He was almost glad at the sound. Some one had come for him most likely. It would be a relief to have something to do, and perhaps a drive would make him sleepy. He rose, and walking through the

small waiting-room, opened the door. It was quite dark on that side of the house and at first he could see no one. Then a slight figure emerged from the darkness and, with a little cry, almost fell at his feet.

It was Lucy.

"I have come back," she said in a faint voice. "You won't refuse to let me come in?"

He raised her gently in his arms and carried her through into his consulting room, and as he laid her tenderly on the sofa he was startled to find how thin and light she was. For a moment he forgot everything but that she was with him once more.

"My darling," he cried, the pent-up yearning of the last year sounding in his voice, "you have come back to me."

She looked up at him sadly. "I have come back to die," she said. "But I felt that I must see you once more, that I must tell you how sorry I am for all the trouble and unhappiness I have given you. I couldn't leave without asking you to forgive me. If you knew how much I have suffered in the last year I am sure you would do so."

"You don't mean to say that—that any one was unkind to you?" broke in Dr. Leighton almost fiercely.

"Hush, he's dead," she said gently. "No, I didn't mean that. He was always very kind to me, and would do whatever I wished, but—but he wasn't you."

He took her hand and stroked it softly. "You shall never leave me again, my dearest," he said. "We'll go away somewhere, and all this unhappy time shall be forgotten."

She shook her head. "Bring the lamp here," she said. "Now," as he held the shaded lamp close to her, "look at me. The doctor at Wymouth told me that I couldn't live much longer and that any exertion would bring the end on sooner. So I had to get away without letting any one know. I couldn't die without seeing you."

Dr. Leighton's hand trembled as he set the lamp down at the further end of the room. He came back to her in a moment with a little glass in his hand.

"Drink this," he said huskily. Then he drew a low chair close to the sofa and, sitting down, put his arm around her. She gave a slight sigh of content as she rested her head on his shoulder. In a minute she began speaking again.

"What a long year this has seemed. Longer than all the other part of my life. We were always travelling to different places. I couldn't rest anywhere. I used to lie awake all night and wonder when it would end. It almost ended without my seeing you at all. We were going out for a sail at Wymouth, and at the last moment something stopped me, and he went alone. In two hours they came and told me that he was dead. A sudden squall had come on and upset the boat. The people on the pier all saw it, but no one could help him. Then, next day my baby was born. Poor little thing, it only lived three hours, and yet it cried. After that I remembered nothing for a week. They never imagined that I should recover even for a little time. But I felt that I must see you, and I think that that helped me to get a little strength."

She shivered as she left off.

"You are cold," he said. "I'll go and get something to put over you."

"No, don't go away," she answered. "Isn't that your old driving coat on the chair? Put that over me. I should like to feel the touch of it again."

He covered her with it carefully.

"Thank you," she said feebly. "Now I am quite comfortable. Do you remember the day we drove to Heydon Castle? It rained, so you would make me wear this coat and you got wet through yourself. Oh, dear, dear Fred, how kind you always were to me, and how wicked I have been. But you do forgive me now?"

He could hardly speak, but he bent down and kissed her tenderly, and she felt two hot tears fall on her cheek.

"I'm so tired. I think I shall go to sleep. You won't leave me, will you?"

She closed her eyes and her head sank back on his shoulder. How long they remained like this Dr. Leighton did not know. He listened to her faint breathing, and although he knew the truth only too well, yet it was not all sorrow that he now felt. The lamp gradually went out and left the room in darkness. Soon, however, the faint light of the grey dawn began to steal in, showing him the pale tired face resting on his shoulder, over which, however, an expression of content and almost happiness had come. She opened her eyes and smiled at him—but quite vacantly.

"What is it?" she whispered. "Tell me what—Ah——"

Her eyes closed again. She gave two small gasps, and her mouth twitched slightly. Then she was quite still.

For a moment Dr. Leighton failed to realize the truth. Then a deadly faintness came over him. He drew his arm from beneath Lucy's head and tried to rise. But he was obliged to fall back into his chair again. What was the matter with him, he wondered? Everything seemed to be receding from him and leaving him. It would pass off. If he could only get—if——

A few hours later, when his housekeeper came into the room, she found him, apparently fallen asleep while he was watching his dead wife. But when she tried to wake him he was quite cold.

A Buried Sin.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE STORY OF A CRIME.

THIS cabin among the mountains had been home to Harold Thurlowe for so long, that every feature of the forest-clad foothills, every gulch and cañon, even the distant snow-clad mountain tops, had become to him like the familiar face of an old friend ; and it cost him a profound regret to say good-bye to it and them and go back to the world which had been cruel in its mistaken judgment of him.

He had made all his arrangements for a speedy departure, settled his claim, and taken leave of the camp generally, which had been somewhat of a trial to him ; for these rough men, many of whom were as well-born as himself, had been his companions and good comrades for so long that the word good-bye stuck in his throat. It was over now, and he returned home in the early evening with weary steps and rather a heavy heart. He was leaving peace and rest behind, and going back to take up the world's burden, and perform the somewhat difficult task he had allotted to himself, with what success it remained with the future to decide.

It was evening. He and Claire, she with her head upon his shoulder, hand clasped in his, sat in the open cabin door in the gloaming, watching the shadows creep over the mountain sides and the great white moon rising in the face of the dying sun, flooding the earth and sky with silver light, chasing the shadows and pointing its long white fingers to where their deeper brethren lie hidden in mysterious depths of their forest home, where neither sun nor moon could reach them. Though Claire's lips were still, her heart was overflowing with exhilarating joy, as she looked forward with happy hopefulness to the days to come. He was more disposed to be retrospective ; when he looked ahead he seemed to hear the sullen breakers booming along the distant shore.

"Claire, darling," he said suddenly, "I don't know how much you have been told of that past trouble, for you have only alluded to it vaguely, as though it was something you were afraid to touch on, and I—well, perhaps I have been a coward and have avoided it altogether. No one, I think, could have given you the details as I can, and I should like you to know the whole truth from my own lips as I alone can tell it."

"If it will not pain you to tell it, papa dear," she answered.

"Not at all," he said; "I have outlived the sharpest part; now it has subsided to a dull aching like the throb of an old wound; sometimes I forget it altogether. I will take a flying leap and give you a sketch of my early days, that you may trace the way later things came about. You know your grandfather died when I was about eight years old and left me to his elder brother Uncle Reginald's guardianship, conjointly with my mother's care. I don't think she ever loved me much; she lavished her affections on my elder sister, Anna, your Aunt Blaine. I remember on the slightest provocation she used to reproach me as being 'like my father,' between whom and herself difficulties had arisen, and they were separated at the time of his death. I only tell you this to account in some way for after events. Children are quick to perceive and keen in their judgment of their elders; I always felt I was misunderstood; and this want of comprehension and sympathy kept us apart. I hated to go home to my mother's house, and in a burst of boyish anger let her know it; this didn't mend matters. As a schoolboy, and at college, I believe I was no worse than others of my age. I got into scrapes, and got out of them. Mr. Levison had been for many years the confidential agent and general factotum at Knaresborough, and was professedly a great friend of mine, and stood as a kind of buffer between me and my uncle's displeasure whenever I did anything to vex him.

"You know how ingratiating Levison can be when he likes, and will not wonder that he crept into my confidence. I trusted him implicitly, and told him everything, even my thoughts as well as my actions. Claire," he added after a momentary pause, "it is not often a daughter hears her father's autobiography as you are hearing mine; but I want your perfect comprehension, so I tell you many things which perhaps I should not otherwise speak of to you." A shadow passed over his face as he seemed to

reflect for a moment, to gather his thoughts and arrange them in due order before he clothed them in appropriate words for his darling daughter's ears. "I will spare you all the little details I can that do not tell exactly upon the point in question; suffice it to say that I fell in love with a very beautiful girl, the daughter of a friend of Levison's—your mother, my Claire, and in time I married her." He seemed to let his following words drop reluctantly from his lips: "I did not know then, nor for long afterwards, that in spite of Levison's mature years he was still amenable to womanly attractions, and had encouraged views of his own, till I crossed his path and won the prize he coveted. I did not know then nor till long afterwards that he proposed marriage to my poor Clarice the day after she had accepted *me*."

"Thereafter I found no coolness in his regard for me; if anything he was more devoted to me than ever. Uncle Regy was furious at the idea of my marrying Clarice, and by dint of threats, warnings and entreaties tried to force me to break the engagement off. My mother shared his views, and joined in the forces against me; but I was determined and carried my point, in the face of disapprobation and angry threatenings which I believed would soon blow over. Well, troubles came thick and fast. My uncle thought I presumed on my position as his heir, and refused his countenance in any way. To my mother I would never have appealed; I would have died rather. Whether her resentment lessened I do not know; I never tried to learn; then in my direst strait she might perhaps have come forward to help me, but I was too proud even to let her know my necessities. You came quickly on the troubled scene, my Claire, and our difficulties increased. Levison, with whom my intimate relations continued, professedly tried to rouse my uncle's interest in my behalf and to bridge over the gulf between us; *then* I believed in his sincerity, now I know that he only widened the gulf and killed in his accursed cunning way any interest or sympathy that might have awakened in my behalf. The 'Blifils' of real life are accentuated editions of the 'Blifils' of fiction. I now come to the time of trial. I will merely state facts, and leave sentiment to take care of itself. I was in great straits; perhaps I ought not to have been; but I was driven to extremities for the want of £300. In my desperate need I consulted Levison; after a few hours' reflec-

tion he said he thought he could help me. The next day he came to me in peculiarly good spirits.

" 'I think I understood that you were going up to town to-day,' he said.

"I answered, he understood quite rightly that I was.

" 'There's a cheque,' he added, handing it to me, 'for eight hundred pounds, duly signed by your uncle, and drawn on his London banker. Cash it in fifty and hundred pound notes—you will return four hundred to me, the other four hundred you will retain as a loan that will relieve you of pressing necessities, and leave you something in hand.' He nodded his head and smiled more significantly than ever, and laying a friendly hand upon my shoulder, added, 'Remember, you are to ask *no* questions. I lend you the money.' I followed his directions implicitly, and in perfect good faith. I cashed the cheque and returned one half the money to him, retaining the other half on the understanding that I was to receive it as a loan. I was to 'ask no questions,' remember, and I did not. I had not the ghost of a suspicion that all was not square and correct; but, of course, I believed that my uncle was my *real benefactor*, hiding his identity under the flimsy cover of his agent's name. You know the result; the cheque was proved to be a forgery. I need not trouble you, dear child, with the legal details—it was known that I was pressed for money at the time, proved that I cashed the cheque and expended one half the notes in payment of my debts, the other notes could not be, and I believe never have been, traced beyond my possession—their numbers were known, but from that time to this they have not been put in circulation! So far things looked black against me. I told my story in the perfect faith that Levison would substantiate it, and give a satisfactory explanation, exonerating me from the slightest conscious complicity in any wrong-doing. I had told the truth, God's truth, as I have told it to you; to my horror and amazement, Levison denied all knowledge of the affair. I was arrested and tried for the offence. He, with seeming reluctance, was forced into the witness box, and in a voice broken with emotion denied my statement. For the honour of the house which he had served so long and faithfully, he said he would have saved me if he could; but his conscience compelled him to speak—his demeanour gained him the entire sympathy of every soul in court. I who

stood stern and silent, stunned and speechless, under my bitter wrong, was regarded as a graceless reprobate and criminal. My statement was regarded as the vile attempt of a guilty spend-thrift to blacken the character of an old and faithful servant. So much for the justice of this blind old world. I have nothing to say against the jury who convicted or the judge who condemned me—they acted in accordance with the evidence before them; but you see how under the strongest circumstantial evidence justice may miscarry; it cannot act against the sworn lie of a respectable liar clothed in broad-cloth and piety. But we will not look back, my child, only forward. Now you know every salient point of the case: the truth lies between us two, Levison and me—hidden in his heart and mine. He is the only man in all the world who can prove my innocence, but we must remember one thing, viz., to clear *me* he must condemn himself. Will he ever do that? If he will not speak, how can the truth be known?"

"It will be known, papa, darling," she answered with shining eyes; her heart was full of indignation and sorrow for this dear father who had borne and suffered so much; but somehow these two seemed tacitly agreed to take things quietly, and neither by word or deed to keep open the old wound or stir the dead agony into life. "There is some silent influence working for us, I *know* there is. Many a bad man before now has been forced to convict himself."

"In that case he has a conscience," returned Sir Harold; "this man has none."

"Poor Ruth!" exclaimed Claire, her thoughts flying in sympathetic affection to her friend; "how I pity her for being the daughter of such a father! Do you think she knows?"

"That is impossible," he replied. "She cannot know, but perhaps she may suspect."

"Perhaps that is the reason why she left home and came to us just at that time, and is always so disinclined to go to her father's house, though she never gives a hint or vaguest suggestion upon the subject. They never seem like father and daughter—there seems to be a cloud always between them, and never a ray of love or sympathy. I have often wondered; now I know the why and the wherefore of many things that used to puzzle me. Papa dear, I would rather be you who have suffered than live as he must live, with the shadow of his secret sin always hanging over

him. How terrible too, if he *knows* she suspects, to read his condemnation in the eyes of his own child!"

"Poor Ruth!" exclaimed Sir Harold. "She was a sweet-natured girl, pretty too, very. I wonder is she changed much in all these years?" his thoughts glancing away from himself and flying back to the bright happy days of long ago when the lovely child bloomed into the beautiful girl whose grace and purity he realized too late.

"She never seems to change the least bit to me," said Claire; "but then when we see people every day we don't notice the changes as strangers do. Everybody admires her—she is very beautiful, *I* think; but I dare say *you* would find her very much changed."

He sighed; he could not bear the idea of finding Ruth changed. When he looked in the glass and saw the changes time had made in *him*, it seemed natural for him to have grown grey and bear the lines of time engraven on his face, but for *her*, he could not picture her as anything but the lovely girl he had left so long ago! However, they would soon stand face to face and he would know.

Meanwhile they were to start the next day on their journey east. In the morning early, Sir Harold ran down to the camp for a last look round, a few last words with some few of his old companions, with whom he had lived in closer companionship than the rest, and to scatter a few souvenirs, which he had collected at the last moment, among them. He left Claire making her own little arrangements, under Oscar's grave superintendence. He had not been gone very long when Richard Gough reached the cabin door, bringing the mule which was to carry Claire to Ophir City, whence they would take the waggon for Grass Valley; as far as Ophir, he was prepared to accompany them. Claire had always a smile and a cordial greeting for Richard Gough; but this morning she was even more sweetly gracious than usual, though there was a vein of sadness underlaying her brightness now.

"I am quite sorry to say good morning," she said, giving him her hand with a tender little smile, "and do you know why I am sorry? Because it is for the last time."

"Are you really sorry to go?" he said, eagerly scanning the sweet face that slowly crimsoned, while the soft eyes drooped under his earnest gaze.

"Sorry and glad, a little of both," she answered; "of course I shall be glad to be in the old home with papa, but all the same I shall be sorry to leave these lovely mountains. I have been very happy here, and—you have been so kind to me."

"And do you know what you have been to me?" he said in a low concentrated voice, with all a strong man's passion flashing up in his face. "You have brought the most glorious bit of sunshine that ever crossed the life of a lonely man! My heart is so full, I must speak just this once, and then 'good-bye!' most like it will be good-bye for ever, for, in this world, I doubt if we shall ever stand face to face again."

"Please don't say that," she exclaimed, feeling slightly embarrassed yet trying to take things lightly; "when you have made that pile you talk of, you will come to Europe to spend it, you know, and of course you will come and find as warm a welcome in our home as you have given us here." Her soft voice and manner sent him momentarily off his head; for a second, only for a second, an electric light flashed from his eyes; he bent forward and eagerly searched her face as he said:

"Would it be any use?—but, bah! of course not! we stand at opposite ends of the pole; fustian can't ruffle it with silks and laces, nor a rough fellow like me let his thoughts hang about a dainty lady like you—but I want you to know that I should like to lay my heart, my life, myself, beneath your feet here and never get up again—for when you are gone I shall be as a dead man with the light of his life put out."

"Don't talk like that!" exclaimed Claire much distressed. "You hurt me, and I am sure you would not like my last hour here to be a sad one."

"Sad," he repeated, "why should you be sad? I only want you to know how—much I care for you—that can do you no harm—and it may bring me to your mind sometimes. I should like to feel that when you are back and happy in dear old England you will sometimes think of—the days you have spent here among the mountains."

"How could I help thinking of them and—of you? I should be most ungrateful if I did not keep a warm corner in my heart for them and you—of course I shall not forget."

"It will make me very happy to feel I am sometimes remembered," he said with deep feeling.

"I should be sorry," she added hesitatingly and sweetly, "for you to think of me too much! I hope this you think you feel now will soon fade from your memory—though I shouldn't like to be *quite* forgotten."

"No fear of that," he said, taking her hand and looking with smiling, though perhaps sadly smiling, eyes upon her face; "this day will never fade from my memory—your face will come often between me and my night's rest; but though you take yourself away, you do not leave me quite alone—your beautiful influence will linger behind. You know this cabin is mine—mine, your father's parting gift—and here, where we three have so often sat together, I shall sit alone—but not altogether lonely. I shall breathe the air you have breathed, touch the very things you have touched, see my own rough face in the looking-glass that has so often reflected yours—it will be there still, I shall see it with my mind's eyes, always there."

At this crisis, and Claire at least was not sorry for the interruption, Oscar commenced barking loudly, and rushed out to meet his master. He nodded to Gough; they had met before on the road. When he was deeply moved he was always quiet and grave; he was so now.

"Claire, my child, are you quite ready? We should be starting if we want to catch the waggon at Ophir; we can sleep at Grass Valley, and take the first train east to-morrow morning."

Yes, Claire was ready. She threw on her hat; the mule was standing patiently at the door. She gathered her last few trifles together, and Richard Gough assisted her into the saddle, while her father took a last look round his mountain home. It is always sad to know we are looking our last upon anything animate or inanimate, whether it be as the coffin lid slides over the dead face, or time coffins the dead past. He felt it so now, as with lingering half reluctant steps he crossed the threshold and closed the door. As though in answer to an eloquent appealing look Richard Gough grasped his hand.

"I will hold it as a sacred trust," he said; "there shall be no rioting or dicing *here*! and no woman less pure than her who is leaving it now shall ever cross the door."

In a few moments more the trio were winding silently down the mountain side. Here and there small detachments from the

camp gathered on the hillsides, waving their hats, and with loud hurrahs wishing them good-bye and God speed.

Thence the trio proceeded almost in dead silence—a silence that was more eloquent than speech ; their hearts were full, each with its own separate feeling ; a thread of regret, a touch of sadness ran through them all. “When shall we three meet again ?” was the unuttered question that stirred them all.

They reached Ophir City only just in time to catch the vehicle which was just about to start. A little bustle and confusion of tongues, and they were off.

Richard Gough stood in the full flood of the noonday sun bare-headed, with his sombrero in his hand, watching till the waggon was out of sight—this was the last glimpse they had of him ; this was the picture Claire carried away in her mind’s eye, and it dwelt there for many a day afterwards.

CHAPTER XX.

A LATE REMORSE.

It was October, which is perhaps one of the loveliest months in the year, when the season behaves as the season should do, giving a crisp freshness to the air, a rich mellowness to the autumn-tinted trees, whose gold and brown and variegated greens are even more pleasant to the eye than the luxuriant leafy verdure the “summer days put on,” with a soft, hazy atmosphere that floats before the face of the sun and gives a mysterious charm and softness to its brightest rays.

The Blaine family had left the Friars, and were once more settled in their cosy home near Kensington Gate—one of those quaint, old-fashioned houses which are still sometimes to be met with in that locality, where palatial residences and fashionable flats are fast elbowing the less showy, but perhaps more comfortable, dwellings out of sight.

Society was enjoying a sort of interregnum between the summer and winter gaieties, though there was quite enough of humanity hanging about town to make life pleasant. The less crowd, the more sociability there is everywhere ; old friends have time to meet and talk over old confidences, old triumphs, and to lay out a pleasant garden of thought to wander through in days to

come ; mere acquaintances have time to travel over each other's minds and become friends. "London is empty still," people say ; but to unaccustomed eyes it seems full to overflowing, and even the general *habitué* finds little diminution in the multitudes which throng the busy thoroughfares ; there are fewer carriages in the Row, fewer fair riders in the Ladies' Mile, but that is all.

After ruralizing so long in the country, Dorothy Blaine found quite excitement enough in the town, and devoted her energies to enjoying herself as far as opportunity permitted ; so much so, indeed, that Mrs. Blaine began to hope, almost to believe, that she was fast forgetting the young soldier who was "fighting afar ;" but that was not the case. Dorothy's natural light-heartedness carried her into the midst of whatever pleasant thing was passing ; she could no more help enjoying than the lark can help singing as he soars heavenward ; perhaps she wasted more blandishments on the other sex than was quite consistent in a young lady who professed constancy to an absent lover, and raised hopes in some masculine breasts where hopes ought not to be ; but Dolly couldn't help it. Two laughing spirits of mischief lurked in her brown eyes, and there was a spice of coquetry in everything she did—it surrounded her like an aura ; in fact, she was full to overflowing with the "perfume of her sex," which attracts mankind to itself without conscious effort—and her fellow-women wonder "why ?"—but lookers-on judged Dorothy wrongfully, as people must do who judge from externals only.

Meanwhile the wheels of life rolled slowly on. There was no correspondence between the lovers ; all Dorothy knew of George D'Alton was from the newspaper chronicles of the doings of our soldiers in Egypt. His regiment was frequently mentioned, and sometimes she even found his name, and from the tone of such terse reference she knew he was doing worthily ; with such meagre information she was forced to be content ; but love can live upon a grain of hope a day, and thus much at least was doled out to her.

There came a great change in Mrs. Thurlowe's manner, as well as in her tone of thought, after Claire's departure. Perhaps the daughter's blind faith and devotion stood out in bold relief and caused her to feel a qualm of conscience at her own unmotherly unfaith and tame acceptance of the law's decision as a righteous

fact against her son. Claire's strong words, hurled so unexpectedly at her hoary head, had sunk into her heart and given a tinge of bitterness to her reflections. She was still the same silent, grim figure in the household as before, but her calmness had gone; she never seemed quite at ease or to feel a moment's rest. She was always watching and waiting anxiously for American letters, and when they came read them over and over again, as though to read between the lines and find some ray of comfort which the words gave not—but there was not a sentence that the liveliest imagination could galvanize into a grain of living love. Her son had written home but seldom, and now his letters were the same as they had always been; he made but brief allusion to his coming home, expressing neither pleasure nor regret thereat, and sent the usual curt message to his mother—it might have been stereotyped, for it was always the same. She had left his life so long void of love and sympathy, and yet she felt resentful now that the flowers of affection did not bloom at her bidding! She might have repeated the lines:

“The fruit I reap is of the tree I planted,
It stings me and I bleed!
How could I hope a fairer flower
Would spring from such a seed.”

Now in her old age her empty heart hungered for the love and sympathy she had denied to him in his utmost need—but he was coming! Once more mother and son would stand face to face.

Reginald Kent had not detached his desire from Ruth; in fact he was more earnest than ever, and made frantic dashes up to London every now and then to spend a few hours in her company, though he seldom found an opportunity for a *tête-à-tête*—in fact she scrupulously avoided it. She had spoken once frankly, said all she had to say, and hoped to have done with the matter and resume the old friendly terms. She was not one of those women who for pure selfish vanity's sake love to keep a man's admiration flickering round them, well knowing they can never be responsive; she would have had it quenched once and for all and replaced by friendly regard; but he had set his shoulder to the wheel of fortune and tried to force its revolutions to his will, and kept, as he emphatically called it, steadily.

"pegging away" in the most cheerful spirits, feeling certain that in time she would come round to his view. He had entered into a friendly alliance and kept up a brisk correspondence with Mr. Levison, who was now at his home at Knaresborough, where Mr. Kent had already paid a visit from Saturday to Monday.

Algernon Kent had given up the business engagement in Austria, having been able to make satisfactory professional arrangements in England, and feeling sure that Claire would not consent to leave her father immediately on his return home, and that she might, nay, would need his help in carrying out her plan in the coming days—and where Claire needed him there was his place—all the time he could spare from his duties was devoted to the ladies at Kensington Gate, who had grown to regard him quite as one of the family. Sir Harold did not return so quickly as his family hoped and expected he would do when he had once made up his mind. He lingered by the way, in order to give Claire an opportunity of seeing something of the country which she had passed through so hurriedly in her anxiety to get to him. They spent two or three days in one city and two or three days in another, besides visiting different points of interest *en route*; but every hour they were nearing home, and one morning there came a letter saying they were now in New York, had taken their passage, and would sail in the "City of Rome" on the following Wednesday; besides this interesting bit of information, the body of the letter contained a great deal of more important matter concerning the arrangements he would like made for his return.

Mrs. Blaine had already made arrangements for him and Claire to stay at Kensington Gate for a time; but this he absolutely refused to do. He had decided to pass straight through from Liverpool to Knaresborough. He wished his sister and Dorothy to be there to meet him, and gave her *carte blanche* to make such domestic arrangements as she pleased; only he hoped to arrive quietly; no one at the station was to know when he was expected, and he would be extremely angry if there was any fuss made over his return either within the house or without it. Both he and Claire thought that any demonstration would be out of place and in bad taste considering all things—they would enter Knaresborough as though they were returning from a country stroll, and nothing more. He had written, he said, to his business agents

on all business matters, so need not trouble them on that score. Enclosed was a letter to his mother, brief and terse. She had listened with hands folded in her lap and lips firmly closed while Mrs. Blaine read his letter aloud, making no comment whatever on its contents. Then she opened and read his communication to herself. One passage she read over and over. It ran thus:

"Do you remember my last words, mother? 'You shall never look upon my face again till I am cleared of this odious charge, and can stand before the world as one of my name and race should do, as guiltless in the world's sight as I am in the sight of God and my own conscience.' What I said then I adhere to now. I am coming home after my long exile and I will not submit myself to needless pain. I will not read my wrongful condemnation and unjust reproach in my mother's eyes again. You will therefore excuse my not including you in my invitations to Knaresborough. One day, and I hope at no far distant one, the truth will be acknowledged, then, if you desire it, we may bridge over the past, forget and forgive, and shake hands across the gulf that now divides us."

She sat with her eyes sternly fixed upon the paper long after she had finished reading it. Whatever she felt, and she must have felt keenly the position her harshness had forced her only son to take, she made no sign. She was not one to show her emotion. Presently, with a heavy sigh, which might have been one of resentment or regret, she said with somewhat of bitterness in her tone:

"Harold is hard and unforgiving."

"He has been hardly used, mother, and has much to forgive," Mrs. Blaine answered regretfully. "Claire has set us a noble example of faith and trust."

"Her faith is born of ignorance," exclaimed the old lady, as if anxious to find some excuse or apology for herself. "If Claire had been grown up and seen and heard all——"

"*She* would have believed her father's word against the world," interrupted Mrs. Blaine. "Let us own the truth *now*: our senses were paralyzed *then* by the horror and disgrace that threatened us; the might of the law blinded our judgment—though you know, and dear Harold knows, that *I* never was *convinced*. I always doubted and thought there was some mystery——"

"Your convictions, or non-convictions, were always of the most

milk-and-watery description," answered Mrs. Thurlowe scornfully. "I was brought up with a reverence and respect for the laws of my country."

"And would rather believe that *he* was guilty than that the law could err!"

The old lady's upper lip quivered as with a sudden change of mood she said:

"I cannot bear too much. It is bad enough for him to be hard upon me, without your falling from me at this cruel crisis! I—I—" she added, with painful hesitation, as though it was hard to make the avowal—a trial to her pride, her obstinacy, to speak now when she had been silent so long—"I have been for some time awakening slowly to the belief that justice has been unjust to my son." She leaned forward and looked searchingly into her daughter's face. "My nerves are all unstrung. I think they must have been weakening for years; but pride, shame, and anger were strong in my heart, and would not let me speak. You must intercede for me, daughter, or this estrangement will kill me outright. I was strictly brought up myself; and, looking back, I think I was a little too stern always to my boy. I did not understand—we misunderstood one another—and when the hour of trial came—I failed him!"

If the sins of the aged are more revolting than those of the young, so is their repentance more touching, for it has less time to bear fruit and right the wrong-doing, if wrong ever can be righted. Her grey face looked forlorn enough, its stern expression was broken up by the emotion which had been suppressed for years, and could no longer be controlled.

Never before in all her life had Mrs. Blaine seen her mother so much moved. She had an uneasy feeling herself that she had not been all she might have been to her brother in his sorest need, and with the weakness of a feebly constituted mind attributed her own shortcomings to her mother's stern example. However, she said nothing of that now, but soothed her all she could, and promised to do her best to soften her brother and bring about more friendly relations between those two.

Later in the day, Algernon Kent arrived in great glee; his high spirits, geniality and brightness came like a breezy north-easter and swept the shadows from the house as well as from their faces. The same mail had brought him the welcome news from New

York; embodied in a delightful letter from his dear Claire, and he had already ascertained the hour on which the vessel sailed from New York, and the very day it was due at Liverpool.

"Of course," he exclaimed, "I shall go down to Liverpool to meet them. Shall I have the pleasure of escorting you ladies down?" Mrs. Blaine answered :

"No, my brother wishes us to go down to Knaresborough to get things ready for their coming home. Ruth went down a few days ago, and is staying with her father till we join her."

"Ah!" exclaimed Algernon, rubbing his hands genially, "nice old gentleman he must be! My brother speaks of him in such an agreeable fashion that I think I must have the pleasure of making his acquaintance."

"You had better wait and hear what Sir Harold has to say upon that subject," rejoined Mrs. Blaine reservedly. "Mr. Levison was involved in some unpleasant affair with my brother some years ago; and there are family reasons why his friends cannot be on terms with Mr. Levison."

"Why!" exclaimed Algernon. "I thought he was an established friend of yours! He visited you at The Friars?"

"On a business matter only," she replied; "his visit then was connected with the death of my uncle, Sir Reginald Thurlowe, who was the head of our family, you know; and Mr. Levison was his confidential friend and agent for so many years, that we have been forced to be civil to him, at least. His coming to The Friars was by no invitation of *mine*"—she glanced at her mother—"but you don't know—you can't understand! there are wheels within wheels."

"Ah!" he exclaimed again, "and some of them seem to be going the wrong way—as when worldly machinery is out of order they sometimes will—anyway, I mean to make this amiable gentleman's acquaintance."

"Wait, or you may get into trouble with Harold, and for Claire's sake you wouldn't like that."

"Never fear," he answered confidently; "I shall be able to square it right enough."

The next morning Mrs. Blaine and Dorothy went down to Knaresborough, and Algernon Kent set himself to get through the intervening days before the vessel was due with as much patience as he could. The day came at last, and found him pacing up and

down the quay at the Liverpool docks, his eyes turned seaward to catch the first speck that should herald the vessel's approach. The hours dragged ; it seemed as though she would never come ! but at last, slowly, slowly the huge vessel loomed upon the sight, and steamed majestically up the Mersey.

The tender was waiting, and as soon as the steamer dropped her anchor, started, with a crowd of anxious friends—foremost of whom was Algernon Kent—to take off the ship's passengers, who crowded to the sides of the vessel, and with eager eyes scanned the faces on board the tender. As one after another friends and relatives recognized each other, there was a wild waving of handkerchiefs, shouts of greeting from the one sex, and joyous excited laughter that was somewhat "akin to tears" from the other. As the tiny craft came alongside the ocean giant, Algernon was among the first to swarm up the sides and elbow his way along the deck to where his searching eyes had been quick to find the face of the one sweet woman, who stood beside the tall, stalwart figure of a man with a grave bearded face and dark penetrating eyes.

There was no need of introduction—no word was spoken ; one flashing joyous look on Claire's answering face, and the two men, father and lover, clasped hands with the close clasp of hearts that are already united, while Claire, her eyes shining through the happiest tears woman ever shed, stood between, her loving glances resting on one and the other in sweet content.

(To be continued.)